

SEVEN

Practical ideas

STEPS

for making Christ

TO

a permanent part

SALVATION

of your life

DOUG BATCHELOR

By beholding we become changed.

The prophet Isaiah knew this. He had seen the Lord—then he saw himself in contrast. What he saw radically and permanently changed his life. What he saw can change your life, as well.

In the eight short verses that begin the sixth chapter of Isaiah, we find a clear and certain pathway to knowing and loving God. Author Doug Batchelor uses Isaiah's life-altering vision and many intriguing stories from his own experience to reveal *Seven Steps to Salvation*.

As Doug leads you along each step in the process of knowing and loving God, you'll discover your deep need of Jesus and His unrelenting power to save.

Seven Steps to Salvation is not dry theology. It is living vignettes of faith that make salvation precious, accessible, and intensely real. The encounter that awaits you within these pages will swell your heart with gratitude and cause your lips to cry, "My eyes have seen the King!"

ISBN 0-8163-1071-8



9 780816 310715

Seven Steps

to

Salvation

SEVEN

Practical ideas

STEPS

for making Christ

TO

a permanent part

SALVATION

of your life

DOUG BATCHELOR



Pacific Press Publishing Association
Boise, Idaho
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

Edited by Marvin Moore
Designed by Dennis Ferree
Typeset in 11/13 Janson

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture references in this book
are from the New King James Version.

Copyright © 1992 by
Pacific Press Publishing Association
Printed in United States of America
All Rights Reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Batchelor, Doug, 1957-

Seven steps to salvation : practical ideas for making Christ a
permanent part of your life / Doug Batchelor.

ISBN 0-8163-1071-8

1. Christian life—Seventh-day Adventist authors. 2. Salvation. 3. Batchelor, Doug, 1957- . I. Title.

BV4501.2.B384195 1992

248.4'86732—dc20

91-31715
CIP

92 93 94 95 96 . 5 4 3 2

Dedication

To Falcon

Contents

Foreword	9
With Gratitude	11
Introduction	13
Step 1—To See God	
Chapter 1: A Vision of God	17
Chapter 2: Step by Step	21
Chapter 3: You Are What You See	25
Chapter 4: Evidence of God	29
Step 2—To See Yourself	
Chapter 5: The Black Rainbow	35
Chapter 6: In the Shade	39
Chapter 7: Knowing You're Naked	43
Step 3—To Repent	
Chapter 8: Sorry Enough to Stop	47
Chapter 9: Just One Mouse	51
Chapter 10: Let Go	57
Step 4—To Confess	
Chapter 11: Days of Our Lives	63
Chapter 12: Unbearable Problems	69
Chapter 13: Better Now Than Later	75
Step 5—To Receive God	
Chapter 14: White as Snow	81
Chapter 15: Anyone Thirsty?	83
Chapter 16: Falcon	85

Step 6—To Hear God

Chapter 17: Don't Fly With Feelings	93
Chapter 18: Crossing the River	99
Chapter 19: Humble Pie	101

Step 7—To Go for God

Chapter 20: Dead Sea or Galilee?	105
Chapter 21: From the Fire	111
Chapter 22: Lost Among the Lights	115
Chapter 23: The Magic of Mercy	117

Conclusion

Chapter 24: Pull the Plug	121
Chapter 25: Learning to Walk	125

Foreword

Writing this introduction for my dear friend Doug Batchelor will be a happy task—and a simple one. Simple because the pages that follow contain truth shared in the way that Jesus demonstrated so effectively, and that I've tried to use through all the years of my ministry.

“The Story”—skillfully told. The illustrations, the true-to-life references that make us all understand and receive help almost instinctively. We read ourselves right into the story, and so we're benefited.

Jesus was “the Prince of teachers.” He found access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations. He presented the truth in such a way that ever after it was to His hearers intertwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies.

Doug has used Jesus' method here. That's why I'm delighted to recommend his book so heartily.

George Vandeman

With Gratitude . . .

I suppose this is the part of the book most readers will skim through or pass by altogether. I want everyone to know, though, how important certain people are to me and how I appreciate them. Directly or indirectly, each one is responsible for making this book possible.

First, of course, I want to thank the Lord for His loving patience and powerful working in my life. It's nothing short of a first-class miracle that this is a religious book with my name on it!

I also want to thank Karen, my dear wife and partner, who constantly encouraged me to press on with this work even though it robbed her of many hours that were rightly hers; my children, Rachael, Micah, and Daniel, who have taught me more about the love of a heavenly Father than any earthly theological institution ever could; and my father and mother for not giving up on me during the years I forgot them.

Now that I have made it through my family, the list could get endless. I would, however, like to thank Marvin Moore, Dr. Lolita Simpson, and the entire Boyle Family for their friendship and support through the years. And also Bonnie Ensminger, my mother-in-law, for the hours, days, and months that she spent putting this book into the computer and deciphering mountains of scribbled notes and garbled cassette tapes, not to mention her constant positive attitude and suggestions.

A thousand thanks to each one!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug".

Introduction

There's no better tool for teaching a point than a good story! This book is based on the first few verses of Isaiah 6, but it is not an exhaustive study or a deep theological discussion. It is rather a springboard I will use to share the process of salvation through personal experiences, stories, and observations. The Bible, too, is a storybook, and every story or parable in the Bible teaches us something about God's plan to save people from misery and death.

A baby needs to roll over before he can crawl, crawl before he can walk, and walk before he can run. Similarly, there is a process to salvation—a sequence, an order of events—that is elementary.

I have divided the story of Isaiah 6:1-8 into seven steps with illustrations. We need to understand this simple sequence in our walk with the Lord for both ourselves and also to help others find salvation.

Isaiah's ministry as a royal prophet was long and fruitful, spanning over sixty years and touching the lifetime of five kings. Isaiah married a prophetess, and they had two sons. Jewish tradition tells us he died a martyr's death. Hezekiah's son, King Manasseh, had Isaiah placed in a hollow log and sawn in half (see Hebrews 11:37).

Isaiah's name means "Yahweh saves" or "God saves." Of all the Old Testament prophets, Isaiah most beautifully and clearly describes the ministry and mission of the Messiah and Saviour.

Our passage in this book is the only recorded vision in Isaiah's writings. In just eight verses it gives us an inspiring and comprehensive picture of the process of his conversion, and this helps us to understand our own. Here it is, from the New King James Version:

INTRODUCTION

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"

And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged."

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"

Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

—Isaiah 6:1-8.

It is my sincere prayer that this short work will assist you in knowing the steps in salvation and in taking them, so you, too, may know the Lord and walk with Him!

D.E.B.

Step 1: To See God

Chapter 1

A Vision of God

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord
(Isaiah 6:1).*

When I was growing up in New York City, it was a “cool” thing to make fun of the police. We called them “pigs.” We took great pride in sharing stories of how we had insulted a cop without getting caught. One time while I was driving a stolen car, I pulled up to an officer and asked him for directions just so that a friend and I could later laugh about his stupidity. Cops were the “enemy.”

But my whole attitude about the police changed one night, when, flipping through the TV channels, I happened to see a very graphic news story. A building was on fire, and the camera was capturing all the drama of the firefighters rushing in and out and spraying water on the building and in the windows as people were trying to climb off the roof to a ladder. Then one of the cameras focused on the main entrance to the building, which by this point was engulfed in flames, with smoke billowing out the windows and doors.

Suddenly an officer came running out the door with a blanket in his arms. Smoke was coming off his clothes, and the firemen hosed him off as he rushed through the crowd to an open spot and laid the bundle he was carrying on the grass and unwrapped it. Inside was a baby—unconscious. Completely ignoring his

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

own burns, the officer proceeded to administer artificial respiration to the asphyxiated child.

My whole concept of policemen as the enemy changed when I saw that he was willing to risk his life to save the people he served. Suddenly I realized that maybe I was the bad guy and the police were the good guys.

That's the way it is with God. For many years I thought God was against me—a great big policeman up in the sky, watching and waiting to see me doing something wrong so He could thump me with His billy club! He was there to take away my happiness. But then I saw a picture of Jesus dying to save me. John 10:10 says, "I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly" (paraphrased), and I realized that Jesus only wants us to give up the things that hurt us!

Ninety percent of all the information that comes into our brains comes through our eyes. Most of us consider that sight is the most important of our five senses. Even in the Bible Jesus compares our eyes to spiritual understanding, saying that if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch (see Matthew 15:14). One of Jesus' frequent miracles was to open the eyes of the blind.

I think the reason so many people have trouble being Christians and staying Christians is that they don't know where to begin. Wherever I go I ask people what they think is the first step in salvation. Even people who have been church members for fifty years will usually say the steps are: repent, believe, accept, and confess that you are a sinner. But I don't believe that any of these are step number one!

The first step in the process of salvation always begins with *Seeing the Lord in His holiness and in the year our king died*.

John 1:29 tells us that one day when John the Baptist saw Jesus walking by the Jordan River, he pointed to Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Later, two of John's disciples said to Jesus, "Master, where are You staying?" And Jesus said to them, "Come and

see' " (John 1:38, 39). In that same chapter of John, when Philip came to Nathanael, he said, " 'We have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth' " (paraphrased). Nathanael didn't argue back. Philip said, " 'Come and see' " (verse 46). We are finding again and again that we need to see the Lord!

Even when we go to the end of the Gospels and look at the thief who died on the cross next to Jesus, we find all the steps in salvation. He *saw* Jesus hanging on the cross. He probably *heard* Jesus say, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). As the thief watched all these acts and deeds of kindness with no hostility or aggression, seeing God's goodness helped the thief become aware of his own badness. You see, the Bible tells us it's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You," Job said. "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). Even the apostle Paul was converted after he saw Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9).

Now you may be thinking, Didn't Jesus plainly say, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing"? (John 20:29, paraphrased). Yes, He did, but He was speaking of people who keep demanding some physical sign or 3-D vision. But when I speak of seeing God in this book, I'm not suggesting that you fast and pray until you have a personal revelation of the Almighty in technicolor. I'm talking about the eyes of faith.

When Jesus arose from the dead, the Bible says the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord (see John 20:20). As Christians, our greatest joy will come from seeing that the Lord is alive and with us always!

The Bible tells us in the story of Zacchaeus that he wanted so much to see Jesus—who He was—that he climbed a tree (see Luke 19:1-10). And when he saw Jesus' goodness, when he saw that Jesus accepted him, he then saw his own sins. He repented, he confessed, and he was willing to pay back. And Jesus said that salvation had come to him. All this happened very quickly *after he saw the Lord*. Yet I believe that even though Zacchaeus first saw

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

the Lord after *he* climbed a tree, his clearest vision of the Lord came when *Jesus* climbed the tree and died for him!

When we see God on the cross, when we see God in the year that our king died, then we are more willing to love Him and to serve Him. This is the first step—To see God!

Step 1: To See God

Chapter 2

Step by Step

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord
(Isaiah 6:1).*

A few years ago my three children and I were driving home from visiting relatives during Christmas vacation. It had been a long day with an early-morning flight, a two-hour time change, a visit with friends, a five-hour drive from Sacramento to Covelo; and now it was about two o'clock in the morning! As we neared the mountains around Covelo, we could see that there had recently been a terrible snowstorm. We still had ten miles of dirt road ahead of us to reach our home, and the last two miles were not maintained by the county. I asked the kids, "Are you sure you want to go home? Wouldn't it be better to stay in town tonight? I don't think the truck will make it."

But they all stated emphatically that they wanted to go home, so we started out. There was quite a bit of snow on the road, but we made it the eight miles to our driveway. However, after driving only a hundred feet of the last two miles, the truck became high-centered in the deep snow. The wheels were spinning in midair. We were hopelessly stuck!

Since it was about three o'clock in the morning by now, I thought we should stay in the truck and look for help after dawn, but we were all very anxious to get home, so we decided to try to hike the last two miles through the snow by moonlight.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

When we started out, it seemed like a lot of fun. The kids played in the snow, and each one forged his own trail. It seemed refreshing to plug along through two feet of snow after sitting all day in an airplane and a truck. The adventure quickly wore off, though, as our legs began to give out. After the first quarter mile, the children found it much easier walking behind me, putting their feet in my footprints.

About halfway home, the depth of the snow went from two feet to three feet, and it took an enormous amount of energy for me to take each step. I couldn't just walk forward. I had to lift each leg up to chest level for each step. I was so cold, hungry, and exhausted, I didn't think I could make it home! I felt like just lying down in the snow and going to sleep. But I knew if I did, not only would I freeze to death, but the children would never make it to the house either.

So now, instead of walking, I fell forward, made an impression in the snow another five feet, nine inches ahead, then struggled to my feet to move ahead and fall again. At each step I prayed for "one more step"!

The children followed in the trail I fought to forge, and we finally made it to the house. I don't remember ever feeling so good to be home by the glow of a warm fire as the children and I felt that morning!

In the same way, Jesus came to break the trail from this world to heaven. Only as we place our feet in His steps will we reach our heavenly home.

I believe there are three primary reasons why Jesus came to our world.

1. To help us see God

Jesus came to show us the Father. That's why He said, "Philip, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9, paraphrased). You see, many people have a picture of God the Father as an angry policeman with a billy club, the way I did. They think He's there to restrict and prevent their happiness.

But when you look at Jesus all the way from the cradle to the cross, you see that everything He did was an act of giving. He was always teaching others, feeding others, healing others, and ultimately He died for others. Through the life and teachings of Jesus, it's easy to see that God is love!

The most effective tool in being a Christian and leading someone else to Christ is helping them see Jesus on the cross. That's why Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32, paraphrased). Seeing Jesus on the cross for our sins—that's where the drawing power comes from. There is no clearer picture of God's love than when He gave His Son that we might live (see John 3:16).

2. To be our example

Jesus knows that people need things demonstrated to really understand, and that by seeing His example we can get an idea of how to treat each other in almost any situation. Although the exact details may differ, His life reveals the principles of how to live. The Bible says that He gave us an example that "we should walk even as He walks" (1 John 2:6, paraphrased).

How do we resist evil? The same way Jesus did. We hide God's Word in our heart. Then we quote it in times of temptation.

How do we act when we are mistreated? Just as Jesus did. We overcome evil with good.

And why was Jesus baptized—to wash away His sins? Of course not! Jesus never sinned. He was baptized as our example.

He arose early in the morning to commune with His Father as our example.

He could sleep in the middle of a violent storm to teach us lessons of trust.

Jesus came to the world as our example, to demonstrate how we should live.

3. To be our sacrifice—our substitute

It's important, when you live on a ranch up in the mountains,

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

that you have a good dog. I have had lots of useless dogs, and once after one of these dogs died, our family prayed that God would help us find a good dog. The very next day there was an ad at the laundromat that said, "Wanted, nice home for good, ugly dog." We called the number immediately and soon took possession of Spot. I guess you can tell we didn't spend hours thinking of a name!

Spot was all that we had hoped for. He was great with the kids, a good watchdog, and *we* didn't think he was ugly! He immediately became a regular member of our family. I never worried when the children went off exploring in the woods as long as Spot was with them.

One summer the children were walking down the road with Spot trotting out ahead, when he encountered a rattlesnake. After a vicious battle the snake was dead, but Spot had been bitten several times. He bore in his body the venom that might have killed one of my children. Spot survived the snakebites, but a few years later he died after a savage fight with a pit bull while defending our home.

This story is a simple but accurate picture of how Jesus is willing to bear the pain, suffering, and death that belongs to us so that we might live. When we look at Him on the cross we hear Him saying, I love you so much that I would rather die than have you die; I would rather suffer than have you suffer. He was willing to take all of our weakness and offer us all of His power. He made a complete and total exchange of everything He had that was good and great for everything that we have that is bad and ugly. He offers us His peace in exchange for our guilt!

Step 1: To See God

Chapter 3

You Are What You See

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord
(Isaiah 6:1).*

I really worry about young people today. Throughout my childhood I had what I would consider normal American heroes. I always pictured myself being like Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett. (I will confess, though, there was a period in my life when I hoped I could be like Superman!)

Not long ago one of my boys was telling me about Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. These childhood heroes live in the sewers of New York City and eat pizza! I think our country is in big trouble if our kids want to grow up to be mutant ninja turtles that live in the sewer! The proverb “You are what you eat” is also true of your mental intake. There’s a principle in life that we become like what we worship or behold. I think that’s the main reason for all of the violent, unstable behavior in our young people. They spend so much time watching violence and sex on television that it can’t help but have some definite effect on their lives.

A few months ago, I was preaching in a small church in northern California, and after the service my wife and I were invited over to a member’s home for dinner. Another guest at this meal was very interesting. His name was Joe.

Some years ago when Elvis Presley was first beginning his career, Joe went to a concert, and he was overwhelmed with the

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

way all the women fell down, took off their clothes, and swooned as Elvis sang and gyrated. Something triggered in his mind, and he thought, I'd like to be just like Elvis Presley.

When I was growing up, my mother used to write songs for Elvis Presley, so I saw him a couple of times in person. I was not very impressed!

Not long after seeing Elvis, Joe went home and purchased all of his records. He wallpapered his room with Elvis Presley posters. He dyed his hair black and bought a guitar. He stood in front of a mirror hour after hour and tried to look like Elvis and sing like Elvis. He listened to the records again and again, never growing tired of hearing his idol croon.

Any time Elvis had a concert within three or four hundred miles, Joe was there! He went to all of the Elvis Presley movies, and, what's even more pathetic, he did this for twenty years. Think of it—twenty years idolizing, imitating, and worshipping Elvis Presley!

By the time Elvis died, Joe had become so good at imitating him that he started working in nightclubs around the country, making thousands of dollars a week with his imitation of Elvis. People who saw him said it was eerie, because Joe seemed just like Elvis. He sang just like Elvis, he walked like Elvis, and he played the guitar like Elvis.

When I met Joe, he was probably nearing fifty years of age. Elvis had already been dead for over ten years, yet Joe was still making up to \$10,000 a concert imitating Elvis Presley.

Joe had come to church in this small northern California town for a little while, hoping to break away from his old life. He had Christian roots as a child. He told me, "I don't even have my own identity. I have been living like someone else for so long that I don't know who I am." So after a short time trying to go to church, Joe felt he had nothing else to fall back on and returned to imitating Elvis Presley!

I couldn't help but wonder what kind of church we would have if we all idolized Jesus Christ the way Joe idolized Elvis Presley!

YOU ARE WHAT YOU SEE

He's the only individual in the Bible we are encouraged to worship and idolize. If we spend all our time looking at Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles or watching soap operas like "As the Stomach Turns" (or whatever it's called), then we're going to be a mental mess. But if we spend our time looking at Jesus every day, we cannot help but become like Him!

We need to see God.

Paul said - imitate me as -
imitate Christ

Jesus said - you've seen me, you've seen
the Father

What kind of God do we see &
admire?

Step 1: To See God

Chapter 4

Evidence of God

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord
(Isaiah 6:3).*

There are many ways to see God. His Word, of course, is the most reliable. God also reveals Himself to us through other people and through the things He has made. Our passage in Isaiah tells us these angelic creatures in the presence of God call out, "The whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3). But many people cannot see the Lord through the things He has made because their vision has been obscured by the cataracts of evolution.

One of the big struggles I had in accepting Christ, and the Bible in particular, was that I grew up believing in evolution. Virtually all the schools I attended taught that people are nothing more than a highly developed strain of monkey. That doesn't offer much purpose for life, does it! If we just evolved from a puddle of mud somewhere, and if, when people die, they just turn back into fertilizer, then there's no real purpose to life. I believe this false teaching of evolution is largely responsible for the high rate of suicide among teenagers. What can we expect if we tell them life is just a biological burp?

I am convinced that we are all affected by our environment—by the things with which we are surrounded. Growing up in New York City, I was continually surrounded by things man

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

made. I heard the screeching of brakes and the roar of traffic. Wherever I looked I saw concrete and glass, flashing lights, and the things that man has made. I got to the place that I put my trust in people, and since people were telling me we just evolved, I believed it.

Then, as a teenager, I spent about a year living in a cave outside of Palm Springs, California, and I began to get a whole different perspective on life. I was now surrounded by the things that God made, and it inevitably had an influence on me.

Whenever you look through a microscope at the things we humans make, you can see flaws and mistakes. But when you look through that same microscope at the things God made, you see infinite perfection. We have two choices. Even the scientists know this. We're either here by accident—by things blowing up—or we're here because of an intelligent design and a plan.

When I went to school in New York City I remember that I asked my science teacher one day, "Where did the world come from?" He told me in essence that the world came from the sun when it exploded and developed into our solar system.

"Well," I asked, "where did the sun come from?"

He said the sun came from another galaxy. When the Milky Way galaxy was formed, there was an explosion out there somewhere in space. Where did the galaxy come from? It came from two gas masses that ran into each other and exploded.

And then I asked, "Where did the gas masses come from?"

I know it doesn't sound scientific to say that matter can create itself, but ultimately, even scientists have to acknowledge that something has always existed. We can look at all the organization and design that we see around us and believe that it all came from gas particles that always existed and started exploding, or we can believe that there is an intelligent God and Creator, and He's always existed. I think it is more logical to believe that my roots go back to a loving heavenly Father and not two gas masses and particles floating out there in the universe that accidentally collided one day and blew up.

When you look at all the evidence in nature, even intelligent people need to agree that there is a Master Planner.

A friend of mine, Dr. Lolita Simpson, walked up to me one day to show me a flower. She said, "Doug, I want to show you something. See this flower?"

I thought, "Isn't this sweet, this dear old saint is going to show me a flower."

But she showed it to me through the eyes of a scientist. She said, "Now here you see five petals, and they're surrounded by five leaves, and inside are five little stems, and it's all perfectly symmetrical. There's organization. There's design here. This could never happen by accident."

Design, organization, and plan do not come out of chaos. That would be like suggesting that you could throw a bomb into a junkyard and get a Boeing 747 when the dust settled, or that you could throw another bomb into a print shop and get an *Encyclopaedia Britannica*!

Even if we could come to the place where we believed that everything evolved, and if microorganisms did just start splitting and dividing and growing into larger forms of life, then, I wondered, where did the need for male and female come in? When people get ready to start a family, why don't they just start splitting and dividing, because that's how they say it all happened? Why would there ever be the need for two completely different genders, male and female, that could not reproduce without an act of love and cooperation?

And what about the birds? I'm a pilot, and I know a little about aerodynamic design. Back when I believed in evolution, I was somehow able to picture these sea creatures slowly developing arms and legs and crawling farther and farther out of the water for longer periods of time. But I always had a problem picturing lizards running off cliffs, trying to develop aerodynamic design and feathers and hollow bones before they hit the ground. And then, if they did hit the ground and survive, how could they pass it on to their offspring?

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

After they are hatched, many birds develop feathers and jump out of the nest, and they know how to fly and play on the air currents with no lessons at all. The tiny little caterpillar spins a cocoon around itself, and within a few hours after it emerges, pumps blood into its new wings, fans them a few times, and takes off to play on the air. The suggestion that all these things happened by accident seems all the more outrageous.

Two friends were walking in a parking lot together. One believed in creation and God, and the other believed in evolution. The evolutionist said to his creationist friend, "Oh, I see you got a new car! Where did you get it?"

His friend shrewdly responded, "Well, I went out into my garage one day, and there was this puddle of oil. I left it alone. Over a period of weeks, as I watched, gradually a Volkswagen bug began to emerge out of the pavement. I drove it for a while, and pretty soon it turned into a Pinto, and ultimately it developed into this Honda Accord!"

Of course the evolutionist responded, "Cut it out. Where did you get your car?"

His creationist friend said, "Now wait a second. You don't believe that my car oozed up out of the pavement, because you know that when you see a car with organization, design, planning, and working systems, somewhere there is a car maker. Just because all the different cars and all the different road-traveling vehicles have tires and headlights and windshield wipers doesn't mean that one evolved from the other."

Ford did not evolve from Chevy, and Chevy didn't evolve from Chrysler. They all share things in common because they operate in a common environment. In the same way, there may be similarities between men and monkeys and other creatures, but that doesn't mean we all evolved from each other. It means we all share the same environment. And so God gave us certain things in common.

When you see a car, you know right away that out there somewhere is a car maker. The human being is a far more

complex machine than any automobile, so likewise, we know that somewhere there is a “people maker.”

In many of His parables, Jesus turns our attention to the things God made. Even in this world tainted by sin, we can see abundant evidence of God’s power, wisdom, and love through the things He created.

The whole earth is full of His glory, and we can see God through the things He made, but we need to take the time to look.

Chapter 5

The Black Rainbow

"Woe is me, for I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5).

When I was four years old, I spent the summer with my father. He had a machine in his hall he used for shining his shoes. It had a motor with a red furry wheel on one side and a black furry wheel on the other side. There was a button on top, and every morning before he went to work, he stepped on the button, and the brushes would begin to spin. He would stick his shoes underneath and buff them, step on the button again to stop the machine, and then go off to work.

I was extremely fascinated with Dad's shoeshine machine. Sometimes I would sit in the hall captivated by just pushing the buttons and turning it on and off. I liked to put my hand on the brushes and feel them as they whirled around.

One Sunday morning I woke up before everyone else and walked around the house looking for something to do, not daring to wake up my father on his day off! I sat in the hall and began playing with the shoeshine machine. After turning it on and off for a while, that little game got boring. So I thought, "Why don't I shine Dad's shoes?" I quietly opened my father's bedroom door, tiptoed in, picked up his black shoes, tiptoed out, and shut the door.

I knew to get them really shiny I would have to use some shoe polish, and I remembered seeing some under the bathroom sink.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

So I checked, and sure enough, there was a bottle of liquid Griffin shoe polish. I went back out in the hall to the shoeshine machine. I wasn't altogether sure what the sequence was, but I felt pretty certain that the black shoe polish went on the black brush, so I poured a generous amount of black liquid shoe polish on the black brush, because I wanted Dad's shoes very shiny. Then I turned the machine on.

At first it shook like a washing machine out of balance on the spin cycle, spitting shoe polish everywhere. Then it began to turn at hurricane velocity, spraying a nice, even black rainbow of shoe polish right up the wall, across the ceiling, and back down the other side of the wall.

Seeing what had happened, I decided it must be time for me to go back to sleep! I quickly turned the machine off, toddled back into the bedroom, and jumped into bed. My brother and a stepbrother were also living in the house, so I comforted myself with the knowledge that no one would know who did it because no one saw me!

Pretty soon I heard my father moving around in the bedroom, and I listened anxiously as the bedroom door opened. I had already decided I would pretend to be asleep. I could hear him walk around in the hall for a minute, and then I heard a gasp . . . a pause . . . and then he called out my name. "Dougie, Dougie, get in here!"

I wondered why he was calling my name. "Nobody saw me," I thought. "I'll just act like I'm asleep."

Pretty soon my bedroom door opened, and Dad walked in. "Dougie, get up," he said.

As well as a four-year-old could, I tried to fake that I had been asleep, but somehow I don't think he was convinced.

I sheepishly marched off into the hall. The black rainbow loomed above me as threateningly as ever. I failed to mention that not only did it go up the wall—it went right through the middle of an expensive picture of a Spanish conquistador!

"Do you know anything about this?" my dad said with glaring eyes.

THE BLACK RAINBOW

It would have been a good time to tell the truth, but that little demonic voice said, "Nobody saw you. He won't know." So I said, "No."

Dad said, "I'll ask you again, do you know anything about this?"

I wanted to tell the truth, but I thought I would try to bluff one more time. I was sealing my doom. Once you start on the road to deception, it's hard to turn back. "No," I said, trying to sound more convincing.

"All right," he said, "I'm going to spank you until you tell the truth." In a flash, he pulled down my pants, threw me over his knee, and commenced spanking me. As I felt his hand stinging against my posterior, I shouted, "I didn't do it! I didn't do it!— I did it! I did it! I did it!" One can only take so much torture before he breaks.

My father set me down and said, "Doug, I'm not punishing you for making a mistake. I spanked you because you lied to me." Then he told me to march into the bathroom and wash my face. I limped into the bathroom, climbed up on a stool (I was still too short to reach the sink without assistance), and looked in the mirror. To my amazement, I had little black spots of shoe polish all over my face! I had thought nobody knew, but when I got a true picture of myself, after an encounter with my father, I saw how I really looked through his eyes. Like Isaiah, I found out that I was undone!

Now let me ask you, when I looked in the mirror and saw the spots on my face, was the mirror the problem? No. I was!

In the same way, when we see Jesus on the cross for our sins, we realize we are sinners. The Bible says sin is the transgression of the law (see 1 John 3:4). God's law or the Ten Commandments are the mirror (see James 1:23-25). The law is not there to take away our sins any more than the mirror washes away dirt. The law shows us the sin; then we go to Jesus for cleansing.

Some people look at the law of God and see that there's sin in their life, and they think the answer is to throw away the Ten Commandments, but the Ten Commandments don't need

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

changing. We do. God's law helps us see the "spots on our face." This is the second step in salvation.

Isaiah realized he was undone after he saw his heavenly Father. One sure way to know that you are becoming a Christian is that sometimes you'll sense a feeling of conviction. That's a good signal that you're on track with God. Remember, when a doctor delivers a baby, he knows it's OK when he hears it cry. Likewise, the first sign that you have experienced a spiritual birth is when you cry, "Woe is me; I am a sinner."

Step 2: To See Yourself

Chapter 6

In the Shade

“Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5).

When I lived in Palm Springs, I had my own steak business. I am now a vegetarian because of some of the things I learned during that time. But for a while, I had my own “Doug Batchelor’s Wholesale Prime Beef Steak” business, and it was thriving! I would buy sections of beef, butcher it, then package and sell it.

I owned a little 1971, three-speed-automatic Volkswagen bug with a cooler in the back seat. I would putt around a dozen cities from Palm Springs to Indio to Desert Hot Springs and sell steaks.

After a few months of driving my car through the desert, it began to look like a “high-mileage” car. You see, out in the desert there are sudden, severe sandstorms that sandblast a car and take the paint right off the fenders. After a few months of driving in that harsh environment, the windshield looked like an obscured bathroom window—you could hardly see through it! It was especially bad when the sun shone on it. I would have to drive down the road with my head out the window in order to see.

Back then I didn’t know much about driving cars. In fact, that was the first car I had ever owned. Growing up in New York City, I always took a bus or taxi, so I hadn’t had much training in basic auto maintenance. I kept looking for a place in my Volkswagen

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

bug to put the water! I later learned that VW bugs don't have radiators! And when it came time to fill the oil, I thought I was supposed to keep pouring in oil till it ran out the top. So I got six quarts of oil and poured until I could see it running out of the opening!

Well, naturally, it blew out the seals. So with the sandblasted windows and the paint off the fenders, I decided to sell my little "bug."

I went to K Mart and found some spray paint that was almost the same color as the car, and I painted the fenders. I noticed that after putting some Armor All on the tires and cleaning it up the best I could, the car didn't look too bad—in the shade! I put an ad in the paper that said, "1971 3-speed Volkswagen automatic Beetle. \$500. Will show after 5 o'clock." You see, it looked real good when the sun dropped behind Mount San Jacinto!

That's the way we humans are. When we stay in the dark, we feel pretty good about ourselves. We don't look so bad! But the closer we come to Jesus, the more we see our imperfections. Jesus is the one by whom we should measure ourselves. We Christians are sometimes in the habit of measuring ourselves by one another. That will never do! We need to see ourselves through God's eyes.

We are all born into this dark world without a choice, and God says He doesn't condemn us for that. But we are condemned when God sends light and we prefer darkness. Jesus said, "And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

When a person has been in a dark room for several hours and someone turns on the light, he has two choices: either turn off the light or go through a short period of painful adjustment. I've noticed when the Holy Spirit begins working in a person's life and he starts walking toward the Lord, he will become aware of sins in his life that he had never thought of before. That's healthy. That's good. God is light, and as we move out of darkness to the light, every spot of sin becomes clear and

painfully distinct. Unfortunately, some professed Christians choose to stay in the shade where they can compare themselves to other sinners. They feel a peaceful but false assurance, like creatures of the night that crawl under a rock when the sun comes up.

If we would truly be Christians, we must walk in the light as He is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all sin (see 1 John 4:7).

Chapter 7

Knowing You're Naked

"Woe is me, for I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5).

When I lived as a hermit in the mountains above Palm Springs, I never wore any clothes. At first I noticed something was missing, but after going naked for several weeks, I didn't ever think of it anymore. You can get used to almost anything if you do it long enough.

Once or twice a week I would hike down to Palm Springs to panhandle for money in front of Mayfair Market, and I always carried my clothes in a little bundle in the bottom of my backpack. I would generally stop at a big rock on the outskirts of town and put on my clothes before venturing into the city limits. As you might guess, I didn't have to do laundry very often!

I remember distinctly waking up one morning, excited about going to town. I had some money I hadn't spent, and I had a list of things to get. When I got on top of the ridge, I felt exhilarated, because the sun was coming up and everything was just a beautiful golden color—all the hills and the cactus, and even my skin seemed like it was a gold color.

I be-bopped down the mountain, playing my flute as I hiked toward Palm Springs. I was just so enthralled with being alive and so deep in thought that I didn't realize I had walked right past the big rock where I usually put on my clothes and was

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

venturing on into the city limits of Palm Springs, with nothing on but a backpack, some hiking boots, and a smile.

I came around a bend in the trail and saw what looked like a Mexican family—a nicely dressed father, mother, and two little girls. As I recall, this was a Sunday morning, because it appeared they were dressed up and out for an early walk before church. As I came around the bend and saw them, since I felt so good, I gave them a friendly wave and a grin, but suddenly I noticed a shocked reaction rip through the entire family at the same time. They all froze!

The mother closed her eyes and turned her head. The father put her head to his chest. Each of the two little girls grabbed one of their father's legs and turned away from what I thought must have been some hideous monster behind me and closed their eyes! And then the father closed his eyes.

I instinctively turned around, thinking, "What have they seen that made them react with such terror?" Then it dawned on me that I had no clothes on! I slid behind the next bush on the trail and quickly put on my clothes!

What happened there? I felt just fine the moment before seeing this family. They never touched me. They said nothing to me. Yet after that encounter I felt awful. What made the difference? I saw myself through their eyes, and I saw that I was naked.

I think it would be healthy for Christians to get a fresh look at themselves through God's eyes. We might discover that we are naked. The Bible says this is one of the problems with God's church in the last days. Actually, the problem is not that we're naked, but that we're naked and don't know it. He says, "[You] do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

We're living in a society that is very aware of psychology. Everywhere we turn, people are being told, Don't feel bad. Guilt is bad. Guilt is destructive. There is, of course, some truth to that. But people *ought* to feel guilty when they see there is

KNOWING YOU'RE NAKED

something wrong in their lives. We shouldn't feel good when we're doing bad. The Lord wants us to feel guilty and convicted long enough to come to Him for forgiveness. He doesn't want us to remain in that state of perpetual mourning, but we must be aware of our condition before God and sorry for our sins and our wretched state. Then God can activate His power in our lives.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:10).

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the light that covered them went out, and they became aware of their nakedness (see Genesis 3:10). They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves, but they soon saw the leaves would not last. After they acknowledged their guilt to God, He gave them coats of skins. Did you catch that? Skins! Something had to die to cover their naked bodies, just as Jesus had to die to cover our sins.

When the prodigal son came home, his father received him, embraced him, kissed him, then covered his nakedness with his own "best" robe. Jesus is waiting to clothe us with His righteousness, but we must first come home.

Through God's Eyes

Our Saviour's eyes are open,
He's hoping you will know
He sees just what you're doing,
And everywhere you go.

He knows what you have need of
Long before you ask.
No need to play hypocrisy,
So throw away the mask.

Our Saviour's ears are open,
He hears you when you cry.
He hears each prayer you whisper
And every lonely sigh.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

But still He waits to hear you
On your knees confessing,
Wishing you'd remember to thank Him
For all your many blessings.

Our Saviour's lips are open;
How sweet to hear His voice.
He's softly calling, "Follow Me."
Now you must make the choice.

There's no better time to listen,
So don't procrastinate.
So dangerous to linger,
So dangerous to wait.

Our Saviour's arms are open
With wounded hands spread wide.
He wants your love so desperately
That He was crucified.

His eyes and ears, His lips and hands,
He's opened every part,
But there's a door He's waiting for—
Come open up your heart.

—Doug Batchelor

Chapter 8

Sorry Enough to Stop

"Because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

One day a turtle was walking through the woods when he heard a voice call, "Help, help." He soon found a frog at the bottom of a deep hole.

"What happened?" asked the turtle.

"I wasn't watching where I was hopping, and I fell into this pit," the frog croaked. "Try as I might, I just can't hop high enough to get out."

The turtle calmly asked how he could help the frog.

"If you can get me a stick and drop it in, I could climb out," the frog said.

"OK," the turtle replied, and he slowly sauntered off to find a long stick. After a couple of hours the turtle returned with a stick in his mouth to find the frog sunbathing by a nearby pond. "What happened?" he asked. "I thought you couldn't get out of that hole."

"I couldn't," said the frog, "but a snake crawled into the hole, and I *had* to get out!"

In the same way, we are all sorry that we have hopped into Satan's pit and often feel there's no way out until we realize what a person can do when his or her life depends on it. We're all sorry for our sins, but we're more sorry when we realize the penalty is death, and it already cost Jesus His life.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

Don't misunderstand, I don't believe that we hop out of sin's hole by our own strength. The Bible says that without Christ we can do nothing. But we must have a will, a desire to be free. We should flee from temptation, but many crawl away, hoping it will catch up with them! True repentance means we are not only sorry for our sins, but we're sorry enough to stop doing them. Some people think you can go to church once a week, confess your sins, and then you will have a clean slate to fill up with sin for another week. That's not real repentance!

The Bible speaks of two kinds of repentance. Judas repented, and then he went out and hung himself. Peter repented, went out and wept bitterly, and the same night was converted. God wants us to be sorry for our sins. Sorry enough to be different. Sorry enough to stop doing them.

It's like two children I heard of who were watching their mother bake chocolate-chip cookies. As she placed the warm cookies on the counter, the phone rang. Mother rushed off to answer the phone, but before leaving, she told the children not to eat the cookies.

Well, Johnny and Jane looked at and smelled those warm chocolate-chip cookies. Jane noticed there was one cookie crumb. She reasoned to herself, "That's not a whole cookie. It's just a crumb." So she reached up and ate the one crumb on the plate.

Johnny, of course, felt irritated that there were no crumbs for him. So to be fair he created a crumb. He broke off a piece and ate it. He made more crumbs in the process, so now Jane had more crumbs. Back and forth they went until soon they'd eaten two or three cookies.

They heard Mother's footsteps approaching the kitchen, and they quietly put their hands behind their backs and looked as innocent as possible. Even though they had bits of chocolate around the edges of their mouths, Mother didn't say anything. She hoped they'd own up to what they'd done. That's how it is with God. He already knows our sins. He's hoping that we will confess willingly.

SORRY ENOUGH TO STOP

Eventually Jane was overcome with a sense of guilt. She said, "Mother, I'm sorry. I just meant to eat a crumb, but I ate some cookies." And then she added, "Johnny ate some cookies too."

Of course Johnny quickly said, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

Do you see the difference? Jane was sorry she hurt and disobeyed her mother. Johnny was sorry he got caught!

Sometimes we repent because we're in trouble, and we want forgiveness. We want to go to heaven. But we're not sorry we sinned. The first chance we have, we're likely to do it again. I think it would be healthy for us to pray, "Lord, help me to really repent."

The Bible tells us in Romans 2:4 that God is the one who gives us repentance. We can't even repent on our own. His goodness leads us to real repentance. When we see God in His goodness, it makes us truly sorry for what our sins have done to Him.

We see Jesus hanging on the cross. He's not just hanging on any cross. He's hanging on my cross. I'm Barabbas. Those nails are my nails. That spear and the thorns all belong to me. When we see that He took what we deserve, then we're truly sorry we hurt Him, and we see that sin is a killer. It's deadly. It's poison. And we grow to hate it.

That's the kind of repentance for which God is looking—a true turning away from sin. The Bible says it's not just confessing our sins, but "whoever confesses and *forsakes* [his sin], will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13, emphasis supplied).

Step 3: To Repent

Chapter 9

Just One Mouse

“Because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5).

For several years up at my home in the hills, I parked my car in a little carport, the same area where I fed my dogs. On one occasion, when starting the engine and turning on the air conditioner fan, I heard a rattling sound, and then *plop, plop*, a couple of little nuggets of dry dog food fell out of the vent down by my feet.

It's amazing the ridiculous things that go through our minds, but I thought to myself, “How do you like that? They must feed the same kind of dry food to their dogs in Japan (where my car was made) as I feed my dog!”

I was busy at the time, and it never really occurred to me how dog food could have made its way into the ventilation system of my car. I didn't think it needed any attention or further investigation. After all, two little nuggets of dog food was not that big a problem compared with other issues I was dealing with from day to day. So I made my trip.

A few days later I again got in the car, started it up, and heard a rattling in the fan, and *plop, plop, plop, plop*, four or five dog food nuggets fell out at my feet. I realized at this point there must be a mouse or something that had moved into the ventilation system of my car and set up house, and I said to myself, “I will

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

have to take care of that someday.” Well, you know how those “someday” plans are. Tomorrow never comes!

Several weeks went by, and every time I started the car, more dog food would fall out. Eventually it got to the place where I would be driving down the road, and when I turned on the fan, I got not only dog food but bits of mouse nest as well.

I took a long trip one day, and since it was cold, I turned the heater up to high. Big mistake! It wasn't just Mr. Mouse, but Mrs. Mouse, and all the little mice that were living in my car, because with the heater on high, five or six little naked baby mice began to crawl out of the vents. Now I was really worried!

It seems the whole family did not make it out alive. Someone told me one of these wild mice can have thirteen babies in a litter, and I think I cooked half the family! I don't know if you have ever had the dubious privilege of smelling mummified mouse, but it isn't pleasant. From that point on the odor from the cooked mice became so offensive that I had to drive with the ventilation off. As summer approached, I kept putting off dealing with the problem. I would just keep the windows rolled down so I wouldn't need to turn on the air conditioning.

One hot day when driving with my friend John Lomacang (I had not warned him about the mouse family that had died in the remote recesses of my car's ventilation system), he reached over and turned the fan to high and pressed the air conditioning button. Something terrible happened. Mouse nest, mouse droppings, and mouse fur began to blow out with hurricane force in our faces, filling the car with swirling dust. From that point on, whenever John and I took a trip, he insisted that we use his car!

Now think about this. I had a brand-new car, cruise control, power steering, AM/FM radio and cassette, four-wheel drive—almost anything you could ask for. It was shiny on the outside, but it stank on the inside because one little mouse had ruined the whole thing. One little mouse that I had not dealt with soon enough, and it messed up my whole car.

I'm sure you get the point. It's these little sins in our lives that we let go unchecked—whether it's our temper or our words or some other habit—that work like termites on the foundation of our experience.

There's a story in the Bible in which King David made the little mistake of looking at a woman taking a bath. Because of that lingering look, that little sin turned into adultery and later murder. He also lost four of his sons and the respect of his people.

These little sins end up dragging us down. That's why if we are unfaithful in the little things, it will affect us in big areas. If we are faithful in little things, we will be faithful in much.

It's interesting that the most ferocious animal in the world also happens to be the smallest—the shrew. It's smaller than a mouse, yet it can kill an animal much larger than itself. It eats the equivalent of several times its own body weight in one day, yet it can fit easily in a teaspoon. Little things can be deadly!

There seems to be a trend in the church today to ignore the little details of Christian faithfulness. When someone talks about “little sins,” he is accused of being petty or legalistic. Ben Franklin said:

For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For the want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For the want of a horse the rider was lost,
For the want of a rider the battle was lost,
For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost—
And all for want of a horseshoe-nail.

Since I'm in the ministry, from time to time I have opportunity to point out inconsistencies in people's lives, when they are professing Christ. The Bible teaches that we are our brothers' keepers, but sometimes I'm met with the words, “You're judging me.” But Jesus says there is a time when we should care about the sins of our brothers.

Isaiah cared. Not only did he confess his sins, but he confessed the sins of his people. He did this, not for the purpose of making

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

himself look better, but because he hurt for the sins of those around him, and he was concerned for their welfare.

You notice in our story that Isaiah first said, "I am a man of unclean lips," and then he said, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." That's the proper sequence. In most cases we have 20/20 vision when it comes to spotting every little defect in the lives of others, but we are oblivious to the major problems in our own lives. That's why Jesus said we need to be careful that we get the log out of our own eye before trying to pick a speck out of someone else's eye (see Matthew 7:1-5).

In many cases the individuals who are the most critical of those around them have a secret sin in their own lives. Pointing to the sins of others and criticizing everybody around them is a diversionary tactic. They hope this will direct attention away from their own guilt. Isaiah was convicted that he had a problem with unclean lips. He knew he had trouble with the things he said.

Many Christians fail to pay attention to what they say because they think their words are so small. But Jesus tells us that in the judgment we will give an account for every idle word we speak. By our words we will be justified, and by our words we will be condemned (see Matthew 12:36). A few misplaced words can cause a whole forest fire of problems. In the same way, a little word of encouragement or a smile can change the course of a person's day or even his life! It's the little sins in our lives that we don't deal with and give heed to that grow until they destroy our lives altogether.

The way to climb a mountain is one step at a time. If the Lord were to show us right now all the changes we need to make in our lives to be in perfect harmony with His will, it could overwhelm us. But He leads us one day at a time, one step at a time. The way a person loses or gains weight is one bite at a time. I'm getting bald now, and it's happening one hair at a time!

Life operates on little things. Jesus told us to pray each day for our daily bread—one day at a time—because we can only handle

JUST ONE MOUSE

things in little segments. The way we get to heaven is by walking with Jesus and trusting Him one moment at a time.

Three or four little nails
Held our Saviour to the tree.
A little crown with little thorns
Pierced His brow for you and me.

It may have been a little spear
That brought our cleansing from His side,
And it was for our little sins
Our dear Lord was crucified.

—Doug Batchelor

Step 3: To Repent

Chapter 10

Let Go

“Because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5).

One day when I was first learning to fly, my flight instructor was teaching me to do stalls. That’s where you bring the plane to the slowest speed you possibly can and still maintain flight, and as the plane begins to drop, you build up air speed and regain control. You are practicing to survive a possible emergency.

At one point while I was practicing these stalls, something happened that was a little out of the ordinary. The flight instructor had given me complete control of the plane. I pulled the power back and aimed the plane up until it was going slower and slower. Eventually the warning buzzer went off, but instead of the plane just nosing down and regaining speed, it nosed off onto the side and went into a spin.

To give you a picture of what was happening, just think of yourself sitting behind the wheel of your car after you have been dropped from an airplane with the car spinning around in circles. It’s like driving toward the ground at 120 miles per hour while you’re spinning!

Well, my first reaction was to pull back. I had been taught to pull back on the yoke, the steering column, to make the plane go up. But there wasn’t enough air speed to get any reaction from

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

the steering controls. With all of my strength I was pulling back until I almost pulled the steering column out of the panel. We were only three thousand feet above the ground, and it was coming up fast! I didn't see my life flash before me, but I almost had a glimpse of my lunch!

Suddenly I heard my flight instructor calmly say, "Let go, Doug, let go. I've got it!"

I didn't want to let go. What if he didn't know what he was doing? What if he killed us both? In those few seconds, I went through a tremendous struggle. Could I trust him? Did the flight instructor know how to get us out of this dilemma?

I realized, of course, that I had no alternative, because I certainly didn't know what I was doing, so I released my grip. He took the yoke, pushed it completely forward, and gave the throttle full power. Now the plane was going toward the ground even faster. But as the wind began to pass over the wings, the steering column regained some response, and he pulled it up with a great powerful arc that left my stomach down somewhere near my left ankle.

One of the biggest battles, if not *the* biggest battle, in being a Christian is coming to the place of making a complete surrender, where we can say, "Not my will, but thy will be done." Certainly this is the greatest battle Jesus fought on our behalf, when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood in agony. "'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me,'" He said; "'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will'" (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus moved over and let God take the steering wheel.

In the same way, only as we make a complete surrender to the Lord can He make the changes He needs to make in our lives and get us safely through. It can be a real struggle, letting go and allowing the Lord to take control. Jesus says that at times it can be as hard as cutting off an arm or plucking out an eye (see Matthew 5:29, 30).

Many years ago an eleven-year-old boy went out into the California woods to help his father set a bear trap. His father

securely chained the bear trap between two trees by a creek where he knew the bear trail ran. After putting a little bait on the trigger and covering it with leaves, he told his son, "Don't fool with this trap."

A few days later the boy wanted to see if the trap had caught anything, so he wandered from the house out into the woods to check on the bear trap. He couldn't see where the bait was, so in the process of pushing aside the leaves, he accidentally triggered the trap. He jumped back, but it snapped down hard on his index finger. He shrieked and moaned and cried in pain for a while, but nobody could hear him. He was too far from the ranch. He sat there in agony, tugging at his finger, helpless to do anything to free himself. The trap was too powerful, and it was secured firmly with a chain between the two trees.

Hour after hour went by. Soon it began to rain, and the rain came down hard. Little by little the creek by the bear trap started to rise until pretty soon it was running around where the boy was sitting. He stood up, but the creek continued to rise around his legs as the rain kept pouring down through the night.

Finally, in a desperate attempt to save his life, knowing that help was not coming, the boy took his pocket knife out of his overalls. With his free hand and his teeth he opened the blade, and then he cut off his finger. I know this sounds like a desperate measure, but sometimes it takes desperate actions to save our lives. Did he do the wrong thing? I don't think so. Better to lose a finger than your life!

Sometimes, in choosing to follow the Lord, we need to sever ourselves from some very dear attractions. Sometimes it may mean laying aside a cherished habit like smoking, drinking, or drugs. Sometimes it might mean severing a relationship with a friend—girlfriend or boyfriend perhaps—who is keeping us from the Lord.

Whatever the struggle might be, it is always better to do it the Lord's way, laying aside whatever weight is weighing us down and letting God have control (see Hebrews 12:1).

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

A wise man will throw away a brick of gold when he's drowning!

Let Jesus Drive

One day as I was speeding down the Interstate of Life,
I saw the Saviour standing by the side.
I did a double take, then I hit the brake,
And, naturally, I offered Him a ride!

Graciously He took the seat beside me,
And as we pulled away He calmly said,
"If you'd arrive alive, you need to let Me drive,
Because I know the danger up ahead."

Oh, let Jesus drive your car,
Go by His advice,
Not what you feel,
Let go of the wheel,
He will take you far,
Straight to Paradise,
Oh, let Jesus drive!

I told Him I'm not ready to surrender,
Then He reached to buckle up His belt.
Soon we had a violent fender bender;
You can just imagine how I felt!

Again He asked if He could do the steering,
So I agreed to let Him take my place.
Pretty soon I couldn't keep from cheering.
He beats the devil every time we race!

Oh, let Jesus drive your car,
Go by His advice,

LET GO

Not what your feel,
Let go of the wheel.
He will take you far,
Straight to Paradise,
Oh, let Jesus drive!

—Doug Batchelor

Step 4: To Confess

Chapter 11

Days of Our Lives

*“And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”
(Isaiah 6:5).*

Why does God want us to confess our sins, anyway? When I was a baby Christian, I used to have the idea that when I confessed my sins to God, I would say, “God, we need to have a talk. You better sit down now. There’s some things I have to tell You,” as though I was informing Him. I forgot that God knows everything!

But if God knows everything, then why confess? We also might ask, if God knows everything, why pray? Jesus tells us He knows the things we need before we even ask. But He still tells us to ask. In the same way, He knows what our sins are before we confess. But He still wants us to confess them.

There are several reasons why God tells us to do this. For one thing, it’s simply polite. Our sins are against God. When we hurt a person, we should tell him or her we are sorry. Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, we hurt others, and we hurt God. And so we are saying, “God, I’m sorry.” Even though He knows that we have hurt Him, and we know that He knows, it’s only proper to apologize.

Another reason is that it’s God’s method—God’s plan for removing the guilt. It helps us to feel and believe we are forgiven. I think some people have not felt the freedom and peace that

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

God wants us to enjoy as Christians because their confession is so shallow and brief. In many cases, we spend twenty, thirty, or forty years sinning daily and hourly against our heavenly Father, and then in a moment, we say, "Lord forgive my sins," and expect to find some solace and relief from that shallow, shabby confession.

Now, I'm not saying that we should specifically confess every sin that we've ever committed. Nobody can remember everything he or she has done wrong, but we should be more specific. How specific? Some people can't even remember everything they've done wrong in one day!

But here's what I recommend, and it does work. I don't remember every lie that I have ever told, but I know that I was a liar. I don't remember every article that I have stolen, but I know I was a thief. So when it comes time to confess, I suggest that you take a piece of paper and write down "I'm a thief," "I'm a liar." Write down "impure thoughts, jealousy" or whatever the sins might be. If you are afraid you are forgetting something, don't worry, the Holy Spirit will bring those things to your remembrance. You may be surprised at the length of the list!

One of the advantages of this kind of specific confession is that you are admitting that your sins are sins. In other words, it's easy enough to say, "Lord, I'm a sinner," but when you finally say, "Lord, I'm a gossip," it could be the first time you have acknowledged gossip as a sin. This allows the Holy Spirit to change you in that area.

After you've compiled your list of categories of sins, start thinking of specific ones under each category. Again, if you ask, the Holy Spirit will bring to your mind the ones He knows you most need to confess. As you remember them, write them down under their categories.

After you have compiled your list of things you want to confess to the Lord, kneel down and say, "Father, I am confessing my sins. I am guilty of these things." Then read your list to God. I know it may be painful, but it's healthful! Then finish

your prayer by saying, "Please forgive me, for Christ's sake."

We have the promise that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," and He will provide power "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). That means freedom not only from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. When you do this, God will give you power to do right, to improve in these specific areas. After you have confessed, take the list and set it on fire—or tie it to a rock and throw it in the ocean (see Micah 7:19).

There are some things you should confess to other people. For instance, if you have stolen something from someone, you should tell that person, and then, as far as possible, you should work to repay it. If you have hurt a person, you must tell him or her you are sorry and try to reconcile the relationship.

I remember one time, when I was about fourteen years old, I worked for Baskin-Robbins. My employer told me I could eat all the ice cream I wanted. He said I would get tired of it soon. He was wrong! After working there for a little while, I won his confidence. Because of the time I spent in military school, I was pretty good at keeping things neat and clean and opening and closing the store on time.

Eventually, he gave me the key to the cash register and showed me how to lock up the money each night. I am ashamed to say that one of the last times I ran away from home, I robbed my employer. Although it wasn't very much—I only took \$10—after becoming a Christian that haunted me for years because Mr. Scott had trusted me.

On one of my trips back to Miami Beach, where I had worked, I knew that I needed to go back to Mr. Scott and tell him I had stolen from him, and repay the \$10. I admit, I was pretty frightened when I walked up the street toward the 31 Flavors sign. I was wondering what he would think of my stealing after he had trusted me so much.

When I walked into the store, I asked the person behind the counter if I could speak with Mr. Scott. He looked at me with a

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

puzzled expression and explained that Lee Scott had sold the store to them a couple of years earlier and moved. They had no idea how to locate him.

Suddenly, at that moment, I felt a great relief and burden lift from my shoulders. It wasn't the \$10 with which God was concerned. I think the Lord was concerned about whether I was willing to do His will. Was I willing to pay it back and to confess what was my fault? He knew I was.

Very few sins should be confessed publicly. There's a story—how true it is, I don't know—of a home Bible study during which one of the deacons from the church began to sob. When folks asked what the problem was, he said he couldn't hide his sin any longer. He said, "I feel like a hypocrite. I just have to let somebody know that I'm living a life of sin. I have been sleeping with the elder's wife."

The people began to console and pray for the deacon that God would grant him victory.

Someone else who had been moved and touched by the deacon's openness also began to sob, and said, "I, too, think I should confess something. I don't know how to tell you this, but I'm a kleptomaniac. Everywhere I go, even though I hold a position in the church, I'm always stealing little things. Nothing big, but I always steal things."

One by one, just about every member of the Bible study began to confess a variety of different sins, many of them shocking and shameful things. Finally everybody in the room except for one man had opened his or her soul and confessed some great sin.

Naturally, the other individuals in the Bible study began to look at this gentleman, who was sitting quietly in the corner. They said, "Brother, we've all been praying for one another and confessing our faults to one another. Isn't there something that you'd like to share?"

He said, "I too have a sin, but it's too wicked. I can't tell you what it is."

"Come, now," they insisted, "what could be worse than all

these other awful things you heard us own up to?”

“No,” he said, “it’s just too dreadful. I can’t.”

They gathered around and put their arms on his shoulder and said, “Don’t you think you can trust us after everything we have told you, and all this confidential information we have revealed? Don’t you think you can tell us what your problem is and know that it’s safe and God will forgive you?”

He finally said, “OK, if I must. My sin is gossip, and I can’t wait to get out of here and tell everybody what I’ve heard tonight!”

I know that’s a humorous anecdote, but it does have a point. Sometimes it can do more harm than good when we confess to others.

A sin that was committed publicly should be publicly confessed. But the majority of the things we are guilty of are sins against God and should be confessed only to Him.

The most convincing way to tell the *world* that Jesus has forgiven your sins and given you a new heart is not with your talking, but with your walking!

Chapter 12

Unbearable Problems

*“And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”
(Isaiah 6:5).*

I’ve been living in the remote mountains outside of Covelo for some time, and for fifteen years Herman was a thorn in my side. When the rangers at some of the state parks in California encounter bears that are violent with the campers and destructive, they avoid killing them. Instead, they trap these problem bears and ship them to remote parts of northern California, where they hope they won’t be a threat.

I live by the Mendocino National Forest, where they release these “troublesome” bears, and the best I can figure, Herman was among the problem bears from one of these state parks, because he did not act like a typical wild bear.

When I first met Herman near my home fifteen years ago, he was in his prime, but by the time this story happened, he must have been nearing retirement. I understand a black bear can live up to thirty years.

Early one morning I heard a terrific bang, and the whole house shook. Our goat began to bleat. Herman had picked up our eighty-pound goat from under the house and was running up the hill. At that time I had been keeping my .22 rifle out in the truck, but I must confess that I wasn’t as brave as David. I wasn’t ready to go out in the dark and chase down a 400-pound black

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

bear with a .22 rifle and rescue a goat! Now if it had been a lamb, I might have risked my life, but not for a goat. Shooting a black bear with a .22 is like putting out a fire with gasoline. It just makes the bear mad.

So that's how it went for more than fourteen years. During that time, Herman tore up my fruit trees and stole goats. At one point he even broke through the kitchen window and was planning on helping himself in the cupboards, except that a friend who was staying in the house managed to scare him away by shooting a gun. I knew that if I didn't do something, things would just get worse. In fact, my dog Prince stopped staying at home because Herman was eating his dog food and chasing him away! I even called my home insurance agent to find out if my house was covered in the event a bear tore apart my kitchen.

Some of the old-timers told me that I had no idea how much damage a bear could do if he got into the house and started helping himself around the kitchen. "They don't just look in the cupboards," my friends said. "They tear the doors off the hinges, and they never go out the same window they came in!"

Jesus tells us He stands at the door knocking, calling to come in (see Revelation 3:20). He wants to abide in our lives, live in our hearts. Jesus always knocks—He's waiting patiently to come in. The devil doesn't have such good manners. He'll barge right in and take over uninvited. Like a bear in the kitchen, he will tear your life apart. The only way to get him out is to let Jesus in! Jesus is our ammunition. David killed Goliath with a rock, and Jesus is the "Rock of ages"!

I knew I had to deal with Herman, but I was not a hunter. I don't even eat meat. I love animals, and the thought of shooting a bear just wasn't very pleasant. I called the Forest Service and asked them what to do about my problem. After talking to them for a while, I got the distinct impression they were swamped with complaints about bears and probably could not do anything for a long time. They said they needed evidence and pictures and forms. I knew that if anything was going to happen, I would have to do it.

UNBEARABLE PROBLEMS

Every time I came back from an evangelistic meeting, I saw more evidence that Herman was getting ready to make his move and tear the house apart. One night I noticed claw marks on the side of my house. Some of the old hunters said that bears mark their territory in the woods by clawing trees. Herman had gone too far now. He had marked my home as his territory.

I went to a friend who is a hunter, and with reluctance, I borrowed his elephant gun. You have to understand that this gun was about as big as a gun gets. It wasn't made by Winchester, Remington, or Browning. It was made by a company that makes artillery! I fired it a few times just to see if I could get used to it. The sound from the explosion was like a sonic boom, and the kickback knocked my shoulder through a time warp.

I figured that I had made adequate preparation to deal with the problem, but I was still, quite frankly, afraid. For one thing, Herman was as big as a black bear gets, and I had never been bear hunting before.

Some of my friends made matters worse by reminding me of all the horror stories they'd heard of how violent and vicious a wounded bear can be. But I kept reminding myself that if I didn't do *something* about Herman, he would soon destroy my home.

This is an illustration of how we often face the problems and sins in our lives. We know we must deal with them, but it's easier to put them off. We have all the answers. We've got the Scriptures. But we keep putting off doing anything because we're afraid of the battle and what might be involved in a conflict with the enemy.

But back to Herman. Finally, one night, very late, I came home alone from an evangelistic meeting. Sure enough, I saw new evidence on the back porch that Herman had just been there. Not only were there fresh claw marks on the house, but I could see wet paw marks where he had just been eating Prince's food. My very cowardly dog had been scared off and was nowhere to be found.

I went upstairs to bed, but I'll admit I didn't rest very well,

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

because I knew Herman would be back. Sure enough, early in the morning I heard crunching and rumbling downstairs. I thought, is that Herman, or did Prince come back for breakfast?

I tiptoed downstairs unarmed in my long red underwear and peeked out of the kitchen window to the back porch. Even though the kitchen window is about four feet above the back porch, I saw this huge black back looming like a mountain over the dog-food dish, moving back and forth as he gobbled up the dog's dinner.

When I saw Herman was there, I thought to myself, "He's not hurting anything. Just let him eat the dog's food and he'll go away." But I knew that when the dog's food was gone, one of these days he would come into the house again, so I'd better deal with him now.

Nowhere does the Bible say we are to look for a better time or a future day to come to the Lord and do battle with the devil. As soon as we see the problem, that's when God tells us to deal with it. The Bible says, "Now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

My heart began to pound in my chest, and the adrenalin began to race through my veins. I ran upstairs, took the elephant gun off the rack, and started back down. I stood there for a minute, staring at the kitchen door, knowing that Herman—400 pounds of hungry bear—was on the other side. I knew bears don't like to be interrupted while they are eating, so I thought to myself, "If I open the door and shoot Herman right there, and if I kill him, I would have his blood all over the back porch. If I don't kill him, I'd have *my* blood all over the kitchen floor!" (I may have lived in a cave, but I'm very neat!)

At that point, I would like to think the Lord inspired me with a safer plan. Whenever Herman came and went from my house, he took a little trail. From a small window halfway up the stairs at the back of the house, I could see this trail. I ran up the stairs, gun in hand, removed the screen, and opened the window. Then I went back downstairs and did my best to scare Herman off the porch by stomping on the kitchen floor. It took a little jumping

up and down to get his attention, but he eventually lumbered off the porch and up the trail behind the house. There he stopped to look back toward the dog's food.

This was the moment! The time had come. I ran back up the stairs and looked out the window. There he stood, a fine old bear. He looked like a black horse standing broadside about fifty yards away. Then suddenly it occurred to me that I didn't know whether the gun was loaded. This was a fine time to think about that!

In the same way, friends, it's a big mistake to think that we can go up against the devil in times of temptation without first storing away the ammunition of God's Word in our minds. All the times that Jesus was tempted, He met every temptation with, "It is written . . . it is written . . . it is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). If we expect to overcome the devil in the battles of life, we need to be fortifying our minds with God's truth. King David said, "Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11).

So I opened up the bolt of the rifle to see if I had remembered to put a shell in the chamber. Sure enough, there it was. Then I tried to remember, Was the safety on or off? There was a little switch on the gun, but I couldn't recall if forward or backward was the on position. The only way to test it was to pull the trigger. These thoughts were racing through my mind at super-sonic speed. I knew I did not have time to linger long, because I had to deal with the problem.

I leveled the gun, aimed, and squeezed the trigger. It seemed for a moment that time stood still. Then I heard this incredible bang and felt the shock of the blast. Herman whirled around and headed for the woods at the same time that the recoil of the gun nearly threw me down the stairs.

When I recovered, I looked out the window to see if there was any evidence of a wounded bear, but he was gone. I decided it was time to put on some clothes and go scouting into the woods for Herman. If I was going to be found mauled by a wounded bear, it wasn't going to be in long red underwear!

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

Dressing quickly, I went to the spot where Herman had been standing and saw the sign that I had hit him. There was blood everywhere. "Now," I thought, "I may have a wounded bear on my hands." I could not let him run around in the mountains like that, because there were other families with children living nearby. Again, I felt like I needed to check to see that the gun was loaded. I want to tell you, this was one of the most frightening experiences of my life! My dog was gone, no one else was around, and I had to go off through the woods looking for a wounded 400-pound bear!

Finding Herman wasn't very hard. After only about fifty yards of following a trail of blood, I saw him lying in a black heap, motionless.

We find heaven the same way. Jesus has left us a bloodstained path.

I went back to the house and gave my friend Joe a call. He quickly came to help me deal with the bear. We gave him a proper burial. It took a backhoe to move him. We discovered that my aim had been perfect—one shot through the heart. But Herman was so tenacious that he still ran fifty yards. (I must confess, though, that I had been aiming for his head!)

Once I had dealt with the problem, it felt so much better knowing that I didn't have to continue living in fear. Now I could come home in peace and not worry about my house being torn apart.

In the same way, when we have problems or habits and sins in our life that we are just putting off dealing with, we can't have peace. We can't keep ignoring them. You have to load the gun for bear and fight some battles. But with God's Word as ammunition, you will never lose.

Chapter 13

Better Now Than Later

*“And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”
(Isaiah 6:5).*

When I lived up in the cave above Palm Springs, I had a friend who was just a little younger than I. He had come from a Christian home, but he liked to drink and fight. One day I said to him, “Don’t you believe in God anymore? Don’t you believe that Jesus is coming? Don’t you want to live in heaven? Doesn’t any of this matter to you?”

“Well, yes, of course,” he said. “I know the Lord is coming, but I want to have fun while I’m young. The Christian religion is too restrictive. Maybe a little later when I’m older, then I’ll give my heart to the Lord.”

One day he was in a drive-in movie theater, and a gang fight broke out. In his attempt to jump out of the way, he jumped right into the path of a bullet. It went through his head. I was at the hospital when the doctor disconnected the life-support systems. He never regained consciousness, and he died moments later.

Don’t misunderstand, I’m not trying to judge whether or not he’ll be saved or lost. I’m just saying that life is very uncertain. It’s dangerous to presume upon the mercy and time God has given us. *Now* is the best time to make a decision to be a Christian.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

As I travel around and talk to young people, many of them echo the same sentiment—I want to have fun while I'm young. The Christian life is too restrictive. Too boring! It's for folks who are too old to enjoy sin anymore!

If we could just understand where true happiness comes from, we would experience the greatest thrill in life and the most excitement working on the front lines for God fighting the devil. It's never dull in my life!

But to wait until you feel like you have nothing left to offer, then give yourself to the Lord, or to wait until you're so old that nothing tempts you anymore because all you can do is to wake up and sleep, is like handing somebody a rose after all the petals have fallen off.

The time to give ourselves to the Lord is when we're young, when we have strength to give Him our best.

Probably, when the dust has settled and the smoke has cleared in the judgment, we'll find that one of Satan's most successful tactics in holding people was not to tell them there is no God; not to tell them God doesn't love them; not to tell them they can't be saved; but to tell them to deal with it later. *Procrastination* . . . putting it off.

I suppose that if 90 percent of the Christian church were interviewed, and if people gave an honest answer, they would admit they know there are things in their lives that they need to change. They know there are areas in their lives that are displeasing to the Lord—some things that may even threaten their eternal life. But they plan on changing *someday* at a more convenient season. Unfortunately, very often that day never comes.

All you have to do is look at the statistics that the IRS puts out that indicate most people don't file their taxes until the very last minute. Another group of people, because they wait too long, have to file for an extension. I'll admit that I am one of those people who often operates better under pressure. I seem to push things to the limit before I get it together. But the danger is, you can't do that with your relationship to the Lord. You can't file for a time of extension when the Lord comes!

BETTER NOW THAN LATER

There was a sign in front of a Baptist church that read, "Repent now and avoid the rush!" Everybody will be repenting when Jesus comes. All the lost will be sorry, but it will be too late then!

So now, while the door of mercy is still open, it is time for us to take advantage of God's forgiveness.

A father was sailing through the warm Caribbean waters with his teenage sons on a small, single-mast sailboat. One day when his boys were out on the deck, he told them, "Sons, we're going to be traveling through some shark-infested waters. Be very careful not to fall off the boat; don't be swimming in this area."

The boys listened to their father for a day or two, but it seemed like he was always warning them about some danger. After a couple of days' sailing through these beautiful waters, the boys got to chasing each other around the deck of the boat, playing some form of teenage tag. Then one of the boys slipped, and as he was sliding over the edge, he grabbed his brother's T-shirt, and they both went splashing into the warm water.

The father had been below deck, but he heard the splash and came running up as the boat went skipping along, leaving his sons behind. He dropped the sail and threw out the anchor. The boys were shouting and dunking each other and blaming one another for the mishap, and were in no hurry to swim back to the boat.

Then the father's heart stopped as he noticed dark shadows beginning to circle his sons out in the water. He called out desperately, "Boys, I see sharks. Start swimming calmly and quickly back to the boat." The boys looked at each other, and then they looked around. Perhaps they had been watching too many movies. They didn't see any dorsal fins cutting the surface of the water, so they figured their father was just trying to frighten them. One of the boys said to his brother, "Oh, I haven't seen any sharks all week. I'm sure Dad is just trying to scare us and teach us a lesson. Let's show him we're not afraid."

So they began to mock their father and swim as slowly as they could back to the boat. They pretended to drown and dunk each

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

other along the way. All the time, more sharks were gathering beneath the surface and closing their circle.

The father understood the nature of sharks. A shark can smell one drop of blood from about a quarter-mile away. By nature sharks are basically cowards. A shark will circle a large, live victim slowly, closing the circle, and then, when he comes in close, he will take a sample bite just to see what the reaction will be and whether the victim will defend itself. But once a shark smells blood, its nature is completely transformed. It goes into a frenzy, ripping and tearing. Sometimes in these feeding frenzies sharks have been known to even bite other sharks.

As the father saw the sharks closing the circle, he called again to his sons to hurry back to the boat. He had a life preserver attached to a rope, and he threw it as far as he could and said, "Grab it and I'll pull you in."

The boys said, "No, Dad, we can do it on our own." And they continued to swim very slowly back to the boat.

In a last desperate effort to save his sons from a horrifying death, the father ran below the deck, grabbed a sharp knife from the galley, came up on deck, and quickly cut his wrist. He plunged out into the water and swam away from the boat in the opposite direction from where his sons were swimming. The boys watched in shock at what was happening. They could see the water begin to churn and turn red over where their father had been swimming.

Now here's the question: If the boys chose to stay in the water and not get into the safety of the boat, what more could their father have done?

Jesus made the greatest sacrifice to save us, giving His life. What more could He have done for you and me?

The best time to *listen* to God's voice is when you *hear* God's voice. The best time to *do* God's will is when you *know* God's will. If we choose to stay in the waters of sin and frolic with the devil, thinking we can free ourselves whenever we choose, we're on dangerous and lethal ground. There's nothing more that God can do for us.

BETTER NOW THAN LATER

The Bible asks a question that I cannot answer. It's a question that you can't answer either. In fact, this is a question that the angels and even God Himself cannot answer. In Hebrews 2:3 we read, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" God the Father emptied heaven when He gave His Son. What more can He give?

Then why do we wait? Everything in the Bible says *Today, now, immediately*. Nothing in the Bible says, come to Jesus when you are in the mood or when it's convenient, because the devil will work things out so it will *never* be convenient to come to Jesus and make the changes.

God will never force us to come to Him. We need to make a choice to come back to the boat and to the safety of God's salvation.

Step 5: To Receive God

Chapter 14

White as Snow

*“Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged”
(Isaiah 6:7).*

In the story we’ve been following of Isaiah’s conversion experience, it tells us that as soon as Isaiah confessed and repented, that’s how soon the Lord sent cleansing. God does not put us on probation for a while to see if we are sincere or set up a payment program so we can work it off. Salvation is a gift. Our responsibility is to simply receive it.

Earlier in his book Isaiah declared, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

That passage has a special meaning for me. Growing up in New York City, the Big Apple, I have a lot of memories of the hustle, bustle, and filth of living in one of the major cities on this planet. From the window in my bedroom I could always hear horns honking, brakes screeching, and sirens blaring. Especially during the time I was growing up, Manhattan had the reputation of being one of the dirtiest cities in the world. The city always smelled and was characterized by filth. This was before they had special laws about your pets. As I walked the city, I could smell the stench from broken wine bottles and car exhaust. I finally got used to it.

It’s amazing how, when people are associated long enough with sin and filth, they get used to it and even like it!

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

I remember one morning waking up to the ringing of my alarm clock. As I opened my eyes and turned off the alarm, I sensed that something had happened during the night. I couldn't hear the traffic in the street below. I staggered over to the window, wiping the sleep from my eyes, and when I looked out I saw that a magical transformation had come over the city. During the night, two feet of beautiful white snow had quietly fallen. The whole city was paralyzed with this pristine beauty. The traffic was not moving. There were no sounds, the air was clean, and all of the stench and dirt had been buried under a pure, white blanket.

It was amazing to me how something as simple as snow could purify such a filthy city. Everything was so clean and bright; everything was so quiet and peaceful. And it was all because of the snow.

Isaiah says that when God sends His cleansing, though our sins are as filthy as the streets of New York City, and though our hearts are as confused as a Los Angeles traffic jam, and though we are in a turmoil like the streets of Chicago, He can send us His peace. He can send His cleansing and transform us as instantly as a blanket of snow covers a dirty, corrupt city!

We just need to ask Him and believe. Then His grace will fall gently upon us.

Chapter 15

Anyone Thirsty?

*“Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged”
(Isaiah 6:7).*

Many years ago some sailors were shipwrecked on the Atlantic Ocean east of South America. Three or four of these men were able to find a lifeboat, and they survived the disaster. They drifted for days out at sea. They were able to sustain life for a little while by catching some fish that were following the boat, but after just a couple of days they began to suffer severely for lack of water.

It's interesting that the human body cannot live without salt and it cannot live without water, but if you drink saltwater, you will die.

After nearly four days of floating around in the ocean, the only water they had came from catching some drops in their shirts from a small cloudburst, then wringing the raindrops out into their mouths. Finally they were spotted by another ship and rescued. When the captain on the rescuing vessel asked why they were so thirsty, they responded, “Because we had nothing to drink.” The captain said, “Nothing to drink—you're in an ocean of fresh water!”

You see, evidently their boat had drifted to a part of the sea where the mighty Amazon River pushes fresh water over a hundred miles out into the Atlantic Ocean. These men had been floating in a sea of fresh water. They were so sure the water was salty

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

that they didn't even try to drink it. All they would have had to do was to reach over the side of the boat and get all the water they needed. They were dying of thirst while floating in lifesaving water!

Jesus said, "Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Yet the world is dying from spiritual thirst while floating in a sea of living water!

I remember when I was living up in the cave, when I first had chosen to give my life to the Lord, the devil said, "What are you doing praying like this? God won't forgive you. You've been too wicked."

But I reasoned, "What have I got to lose? I might as well try it. I've tried everything else." So I reached out and up, and He took my hand.

God is never very far away!

It's like the woman who came home from work to discover that she had left her house key at the office. Knowing the upstairs bathroom window was open, she climbed up on the roof and tried to squeeze through it. She was able to get halfway in, but then she got stuck. She could not get in, nor could she get out. Soon the neighbors heard her cries for help and called the fire department. The firemen and police arrived, not to mention the local newsmen, and all the neighbors came out to look at her posterior and legs dangling out the window into empty space.

She was finally rescued when a fireman entered the house and pulled her inside. After she had dusted herself off, she asked the fireman how he got into the house.

"I walked through the front door," he said. "It had been unlocked all the time."

She had never reached out and tried it!

I wonder why so many people are so reluctant to exercise a little faith and reach out. Even if our faith is small, we need to give God a chance! The Bible says that as soon as we draw near to God, He draws near to us (see James 4:8).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Step 5: To Receive God

Chapter 16

Falcon

*“Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged”
(Isaiah 6:7).*

In our story of Isaiah’s conversion, we see that God sometimes needs to use heat to melt our stony hearts and enable us to receive His forgiveness and cleansing. In the Bible this heat or fire represents the trials and suffering God allows us to encounter in order to teach us lessons of faith.

I have one brother—or perhaps I should say I had one brother. You see, not too long ago my brother Falcon passed away. He was born with a terminal disease called cystic fibrosis. Even though the average life expectancy is between fifteen and eighteen years, through some persistence he learned or inherited, and the grace of God, he lived to be thirty-five.

His day consisted of waking up and coughing, taking pills by the handful, sometimes without water because he had become so accustomed to it; and then he would receive respiratory therapy so he could continue breathing. He then spent the rest of his day doing exercises and inhaling mist simply to keep breathing. It was like fighting off drowning all day long.

Falcon was a tremendous individual. He started a camp for kids with CF and was always concerned about other people’s needs. Part of the reason for his sensitivity to the hurts and needs of others was that he had suffered so much during his life. The trials of his disease taught him to love.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

One time when I was in Florida, Falcon and I were out jogging together. After running 100 yards, he stopped to have a coughing fit. When he had regained his composure, we walked for a while.

"Doug," he said, "you're lucky." I wondered exactly what he meant, because I had dropped out of school and run away, while Falcon finished college and worked for Dad. He had a new house right on the water in Miami Beach, three new cars, and a boat.

"What do you mean, Falcon?" I asked as we stopped walking so he could catch his breath again.

He said, "I'd give everything I own to have your lungs."

And I would have given him my lungs if I could! But there was a hidden message in his words that day. He was saying that there is nothing more important than life. He was willing to sacrifice every earthly belonging or position for even a little more of this life.

Yet we Christians are sometimes so reluctant to deny ourselves a habit or practice for Jesus and *everlasting* life. "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Because Falcon had seen so much hypocrisy in the name of Christianity, he had a hard time accepting religion per se. He would always say exactly what was on his mind, and he would gently tease me any time I offered to pray as we ate together.

One day I received a phone call from the family that Falcon had been admitted to the hospital and would probably not come home. I quickly took a plane to Florida, praying all the way that I would be able to see my brother before he died. I wanted to at least be able to tell him again that I loved him, and I wanted to pray with him.

My family is not at all religious. Some of them profess to be either agnostic or atheist. Falcon at least accepted that there was a God. He just had trouble believing in organized religion.

When I arrived in Florida, my father met me, and we went straight to the hospital. My brother was sitting up in bed, leaning

over one of those rolling hospital tables, lying with his chest on a pillow, struggling to breathe. He had been sitting in this position for the last two days. He knew if he lay down, he would no longer be able to breathe. The doctor told us that just a fraction of his lungs were working. He had an oxygen mask on with the oxygen turned up all the way. When my father and I came into the room, he opened his eyes and nodded.

For a long time I just sat there holding his hand. I must confess that it was a very tense moment. My mother and father had gone through a bitter divorce thirty years earlier, and now they had to be in the same room because of their common love for Falcon.

That helps me to remember that out of a common love for Jesus, Christians can learn to put aside differences and get along with each other.

Falcon married a wonderful woman. Even though he had a terminal disease, the Lord gave him a very supportive wife. From time to time when I came to Florida to visit, Sandy would go to church with me. She has probably been the one in the family who has respected my religion and values as a Christian more than anyone else. The rest of my family has sometimes hinted that I am wasting my life in the ministry. Some of them have chided me for not coming to work with my dad and helping him with his business. I'll confess that at times I have been tempted to do this, just to be with my father, and to be able to work with him. But I knew the Lord has called me to do something different.

After being at the hospital for a while, Sandy asked my brother if it would be OK if I prayed. This was the first time my family had ever asked me to pray. Falcon couldn't speak because he had an oxygen mask on, but he nodded, Yes.

It has never been so hard or so important for me to pray before. I prayed one of the most intense prayers of my life. I remember that I prayed for the Lord to be with Falcon, for him to have peace in his heart and his body, and to be with the family, and for His will to be done.

I sensed that God's Spirit had come into the room. My

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

mother, who is a very strong individual, began to sob and cry. Sandy was crying, Falcon was squeezing my hand, and I just knew suddenly they all realized, through this trial they were experiencing, that God is ultimately the only answer for the needs in our lives.

Not long after I prayed, Falcon asked if he could lie down. After sitting up to keep breathing for two days, I knew he had resigned himself that it was now time to die. I felt that he must have felt some peace with God in his heart after we prayed together. He couldn't talk to us because he had a mask on his face, so we put him in the bed. He gave me a couple of hand signals to raise his head, then lower the bed. Then he gave me a very deliberate "OK" sign to say he finally felt a position where he could breathe at least a little bit.

With the family out of the room, I sat down next to Falcon and I said, "I'll just talk to you," and he nodded. I told him a little about my children. He never had any of his own, and he was always deeply interested in how they were doing. I didn't feel it was important to get him to say a little speech or to utter some words or to have some kind of last rites, but I just wanted to be with him and to let him know that I loved him. I felt peace in my heart that he would be in the kingdom and that he had put his trust in the Lord.

Falcon's breathing grew slower and slower, and I knew that he would die soon. I called Sandy and my mother back into the room, and we all held his hand. Within a few minutes he breathed his last breath.

Even though the family knew he had a terminal disease, nobody had made any preparation for his funeral. No one wants to think they will die or that anyone they love will die. But suddenly everyone in the family realized there was a need for a minister. They asked if I would take charge of the service and make the arrangements. I was thankful for the opportunity, because when you are grieving, you need something to do. It was through the trial, through this fiery trial of watching a loved one

die, that everyone realized their need of God and the importance of spiritual things.

We all have a terminal disease. Life is terminal. Sin is the disease. Even though Jesus will forgive us, we will all die the first death unless He comes first, so we should make preparation now.

Because Falcon knew his life was terminal, he worked hard to take care of his body. He valued every moment and lived life to the fullest. If we remember that this life is short and uncertain, we will cherish every moment and be more faithful to seek first God's kingdom.

God does not allow trials to come upon just bad or unconverted people. Bad things happen to good people as well. Remember Job's suffering? And Joseph spent several years in prison as God prepared him for his lifework. The apostles, and, of course, Jesus, suffered for doing good.

You will notice that Isaiah said his sin was unclean lips, so God put a coal on his lips. I've often wondered where God puts the coals on different people. All of us have different sins and different temptations. We are all sinners, but our sins are different. Some people have comforted themselves that because they do not kill, rape, or steal, they are "little" sinners. In God's eyes, there's no such thing as a "little" sinner. We are all "big" sinners. The reason we know we are "big" sinners is that we all need a "big" Saviour who has offered "big" forgiveness. All of us, regardless of how minuscule we may think our faults are, have committed sins that are big enough by themselves to put Jesus on the cross!

Isaiah said, "Woe is me," because he was a man of unclean lips. Though some church members may flatter themselves that they have never committed serious sins like murder, adultery, and theft, God tells us that one of the most offensive sins is anger in our heart toward someone else. Thus backbiting and gossip are murder. The Lord considers these sins every bit as serious as any others.

Some of us say, "Yes, I love my neighbor," but then we spend a great deal of time talking about the faults of others. We need

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

to confess, "Lord, I'm a man of unclean lips." We need to ask God to put the coal wherever He sees it is needed.

You also notice that God uses hot coals to purify His people. The Scripture tells us that God is coming for a church that is without spot or wrinkle (see Ephesians 5:27). The way you get out spots is with hot water. And the way you get out the wrinkles is with a hot iron.

Many Christians are surprised when the Lord allows them to go through fiery trials to purify their faith and refine their characters, but the heat is God's blessed method of purifying His people. So remember, it may take a heavy load to bring you to your knees. God may have to put you flat on your back before you look up. And though you may feel at times like a useless lump of black coal, with a little heat and pressure, God will turn you into a diamond!

Give Me a Heart

Lord, let me see with Your eyes,
Myself and all whom I meet.
I can go with Your sight through the darkest night;
Lord, let me see with Your eyes.

Lord, let me speak with Your lips,
With kindness in all that I say,
Till everyone has heard of the hope in Your Word;
Lord, let me speak with Your lips.

And, Lord, let me love with Your heart;
Come water the seed You have sown.
A miracle You must impart, dear Lord;
Please give me a heart like Your own.

Lord, let me walk with Your feet,
Though narrow and straight be the way.

When the road goes uphill I will follow You still,
Lord, let me walk with Your feet.

Lord, let me give with Your hands,
Remembering how much You gave.
Help me to give that others may live;
Lord, let me give with Your hands.

And, Lord, let me love with Your heart,
All I have now is this heart of stone.
A miracle You must impart, dear Lord;
Please give me a heart like Your own!

—Doug Batchelor

Chapter 17

Don't Fly With Feelings

*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying . . .
(Isaiah 6:8).*

A few years back I was doing an evangelistic series in Anderson, California. During that time, John Lomacang, my singing evangelist; his wife Angie; and I were invited to go to Crescent City and speak in preparation for a series of meetings we would be starting there.

The problem was that Anderson and Crescent City are 235 miles apart, with a crooked, two-lane road between them. I could not drive there in the morning and get back the same evening in time to continue our meetings in Anderson.

Since I am a pilot, the best solution seemed to be to fly. So I rented a plane in Redding, and early the next morning John and Angie and I arrived at the airport. I called Crescent City to make sure the airport was open and clear. It was, so we took off.

Perhaps I should explain that John and Angie had a terrific fear of flying, especially John. He was even afraid of flying in a 747, let alone in a single-engine airplane! I persuaded them, though, that they had nothing to worry about, and with some reluctance they climbed into the plane.

As we flew along, I did everything I could to assure them. It was, after all, a beautiful day and a smooth flight. But as we approached the coast where Crescent City was supposed to be,

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

I discovered that the fog had rolled in from the ocean, and I could not see the airport. In fact, the entire town had disappeared under a blanket of fluffy white. All we saw was hundreds of miles of mountains. Then, to my dismay, I discovered the radio instruments at the Crescent City airport were not operating.

I should add that the area between Redding and Crescent City is the largest untouched wilderness still left in California. For hundreds of square miles in any direction, there's nothing but forest and mountains.

I knew that Crescent City was at the end of a river, so I went up and down the coast, following the fog line looking for a river. However, I flew around in circles so long trying to decide what to do that I lost track of where I was. I finally found a river and thought if I could fly underneath this ceiling of fog, then I could find Crescent City and the airport. Getting out would be no problem. I would just fly straight up, and after a few hundred feet of white we would break into the open blue.

I tried to act cheerful and unconcerned as I lowered the plane under the ceiling of fog and began to follow the river with mountains on both sides. It was like flying through a tunnel.

We flew along, following the river, till we got to where Crescent City was supposed to be, but instead, there was a sea underneath us. The river had turned into the Pacific Ocean! We were on our way to Japan. Much as I would have enjoyed seeing Japan, I knew I did not have enough fuel, and besides, I was supposed to be doing something else that morning!

I wondered how John and Angie were reacting to some of these changes in plans, so I looked back and saw that Angie was sleeping peacefully. I commented to John, "I'm glad to see your wife is able to relax and sleep."

He quickly responded, "She's not relaxed. She fainted!"

At this point I didn't know where the mountains were. I thought I had better just fly straight up and break through the fog and head back toward the coast. I was not instrument rated,

DON'T FLY WITH FEELINGS

but to get your pilot's license you need to have some training in flying by your instruments.

When you pull up into the fog, you lose all sense of bearing, because you have nothing visible by which to gauge your attitude of flight. As a matter of fact, I have heard stories of pilots who flew into a cloud, and when they came out the other side, they were flying completely upside down! When you are flying at 120 miles per hour in a cloud, it's hard for your body to judge the angle at which you are traveling.

As we flew through the clouds, I thought we were heading straight up and level, but when I looked at my instruments, they said I was going down and turning. I looked at John. He didn't look any more concerned than usual, and it didn't feel like we were going down and turning. I'll confess it was a little bit of a struggle to make the decision to follow my instruments instead of my feelings. Everything in my body told me that we were going up and level, but my instruments said we were going down and turning. I had to choose whether to follow my instruments or to follow my feelings.

One thing I learned in my flight instruction was not to go by my feelings. "Trust your instruments," the instructor said over and over. So, ignoring everything I felt, I began to turn the plane in order to level my instruments. Then I pulled back on the stick and added power so that the instruments said we were going up and level.

Now John, and Angie, who had recovered, were looking at me, wondering what I was doing. "Why are you going straight up?" John asked. I explained to them that I had to follow my instruments. And it was a good thing I did, because after a few more minutes of fighting my feelings and following the instrument panel, we broke through the fog into the blue sky, and I discovered that the instruments were correct. I also noticed a range of steep mountains just off to the left where I had been turning! If I had not followed my instruments, we certainly would have crashed into a mountain or the ocean.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

So it is in the Christian life. The Bible is the only safe guide to follow. We cannot trust our feelings. It's never safe to make spiritual decisions that are based only on how you feel. Feelings can be governed by a number of variables—what you've eaten, the condition of your health, or what the weather is like. All these things can change, but the Word of God is like a rock. It's a solid anchor that never moves or changes.

Our decisions must be based on what the Word says, not what everyone around us is saying. Even the norms and traditions of the church that have been accepted for many years are not a trustworthy guide. The Bible says many things that are highly esteemed by people but that are an abomination to God (see Luke 16:15). If you follow your feelings, and if you follow the crowd, you will crash. It's not even safe to follow a religious crowd. Remember, it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus.

One query that I frequently hear from new Christians is how to know whose interpretation of the Bible to follow. Every church teaches something a little different.

I sincerely believe that the biggest battle we face in understanding God's Word is simply being willing to do what it says. If we are honestly and sincerely wanting to do whatever God says, then it is God's responsibility to help us know what He wants. We need not only a willingness to do God's will; Jesus says we also need to be willing to seek, to know His will, to ask, to knock. And we should not knock just once or twice. Sometimes we need to knock until our knuckles are numb!

The Bible says, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). That is probably the most important commandment in the Christian life!

Some might say, "But I still have trouble understanding the Bible."

The secret to hearing and understanding God's voice is being committed and listening. You see, when a person is a born-again Christian, when he's been cleansed, then he'll hear God's voice.

DON'T FLY WITH FEELINGS

He may not understand at first, but the more he listens, the more he will understand.

It's like an infant. The parents lean over the crib and talk to their baby and say things like, "Mommy and Daddy love you." "Are you hungry?" The baby at first doesn't understand what his parents are saying, but he knows that they love him. The more he listens and the more he grows, the more he understands. As baby Christians, we may not understand everything in God's Word, but we understand the basics, and the more we listen, the more we understand.

When I read the Bible I found in a cave, there was a lot I didn't understand. But after reading the Gospels, I understood that God loved me. I understood that I was a big sinner and He was a big Saviour. And that was a good starting point. From there on, as I continued reading, I understood His voice better, and I was able to understand His will better.

Sometimes we have trouble understanding what God is saying because we're not willing to listen to His voice. A young lady attended a series of meetings I was conducting in Covelo, California. Night after night I could see her eyes brighten, and she was sitting on the edge of her seat. She seemed to be taking in God's Word with enthusiasm. But about three-quarters of the way through the meetings, I noticed a sudden change. She sat back in her seat with her arms folded and her eyebrows knit together. I knew something was wrong.

So I went to visit her. When I asked how she was enjoying the meetings, she said, "For the first few weeks it was tremendous. I could hear the Lord speaking to me. I was opening the Bible, and I could understand what God was saying, but then you covered a subject that I just didn't appreciate."

As we talked I discovered that God's Word went against a practice in her life that she knew she needed to change, and she had no intention of changing. So she put on the brakes. She told me that it seemed now she was not getting anything out of the meetings, and when she read the Bible it just looked like black ink on

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

white paper.

I said, "Could it be that God is not speaking to you because you're not listening to Him?"

Being a Christian is a series of progressive steps. As long as we're willing to listen, God is willing to speak. The Bible says that if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, then even our prayers become an abomination! (see Proverbs 28:9). If we stop listening to God, He'll stop speaking to us. If there are some areas in our life to which we're plugging our ears and turning our heads, then the Lord cannot reveal new things and direct our paths.

Chapter 18

Crossing the River

*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying . . .
(Isaiah 6:8).*

We experienced one of the hardest freezes in California's history during the winter of 1990. Pipes were broken everywhere. The lake in front of our house froze solid. I spent much of Christmas week underneath my house soldering broken water pipes.

A few days after the "big freeze," we went to visit our neighbors who have a home on the Eel River. They told us of all the fun they'd been having playing on the frozen river. You see, this was the first time in fifty years that the Eel River had frozen clear across. It was quite a sensation to see the river frozen like glass, with leaves and fish floating visibly beneath the surface.

My boys, Micah and Daniel, together with Joe Boyle and his son Craig, began to play a game to see who could get across the river without falling through the ice. You know, boys don't have as much fun playing unless there is an element of danger! Most of the river was quite shallow, but it would be a shocking experience to fall into freezing water on a winter day, even if it was just up to your knees. As we went out a little ways, we would hear the ice start cracking. Craig and Micah would try to run across the river, but sure enough, they'd go crashing knee-deep into the water and come scrambling out.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

After about an hour of trying to get across without getting wet, I was the only one who succeeded. I must admit that I cheated a little bit. You see, whenever I heard the ice starting to crack, I would get down on my hands and knees and spread out my weight on the ice. It must have looked funny, but it worked. I made it across the river without falling through!

In order for the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land, they had to cross the Jordan River. Friends, in our journey to heaven we've got to cross that river too. Just as the ice was cracking around us on the Eel River, so there will be dangers as you and I cross our river. It's only through spending lots of time on our knees, together with Bible study, that we can keep from falling through.

Suppose there were a secret weapon, some little red hutton, that you and I could push to be certain of everlasting life. Would you push it? Actually, there is such a thing. We call it Bible study and prayer. We must read our Bibles and pray consistently.

Let me explain. To receive eternal life we must know and love the Lord. We can't love people unless we know them. It's impossible to get to know a person if you never talk to him or hear him talk to you. The way we communicate with God is through prayer. The way He talks to us is principally through His Word.

But friends, we don't have to wait until the ice is cracking all around us to receive the blessings and strength that come from Bible study and prayer. We can start now.

An ancient proverb says, "A smart man buys his umbrella on a sunny day."

Step 6: To Hear God

Chapter 19

Humble Pie

*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying . . .
(Isaiah 6:8).*

The Lord speaks to us in many ways. Of course, He speaks to us primarily through the Scriptures, but He also communicates to us through Christian ministers, Christian books, nature, and providence.

The Bible tells of the night Peter saw Jesus walking on the water and Jesus invited him to walk on the water too. When Peter stepped out of the boat and into the stormy waves, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he was easily able to rise above the tempest around him. But then he became proud. He took his eyes off Jesus to see if his friends were watching him, and he began to go down. The Bible says that when he saw the waves, his faith began to sink, and when his faith began to sink, he began to sink too.

Then Peter said a very short prayer: "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30).

According to Mark, as soon as Peter acknowledged his mistake and asked for help, Jesus stretched out His hand and helped him up. And as soon as Isaiah confessed and repented, the Lord sent cleansing and forgiveness.

Every human being is on probation, but that doesn't mean we're on trial to prove ourselves. You see, as soon as we sincerely

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

repent and confess our sins, God immediately offers cleansing, forgiveness, and power to live a different life.

You can be sure Peter never forgot this experience. It taught him two important lessons: (1) When you take your eyes off Jesus, you start to sink, and (2) when you reach out to Jesus, you start to rise.

One of the first temptations a person falls into when he succeeds is pride, and early in my ministry, when I had just begun preaching, I met with a modest amount of success. I believed everything people said as they filed out of church after listening to a sermon. I have since learned to take these compliments with a grain of salt! Sometimes people say these nice things at the door after a sermon because they don't know what else to say.

I was in the middle of a seminar, the church was packed, the people seemed to be very interested, and I think I was becoming a little bit big-headed at my ability to hold an audience. On one such night, I was preaching my heart out. I felt that energy and eloquence that ministers hope for. The words were flowing easily, and I noticed that the congregation seemed to be captivated, sitting on the edge of their seats, their eyes open wide. I had their undivided attention!

After the closing prayer I hurried back to the door, expecting to drink in a flood of compliments, words of approval and commendation. Instead, the very first person who came to the door was a middle-aged lady who rushed to me and whispered, "Doug, I wanted to hurry back. Someone needs to tell you that your fly has been open all evening long, and I think everyone else will be afraid to say anything for fear of embarrassing you!"

Oh, dear! Talk about a humiliating experience—talk about hearing the voice of the Lord through providence! (see Numbers 22:28). God in His love gave me that incident to teach me a lesson I will never forget! I am reminded that God can use almost anyone. He can even speak through a donkey if He wants!

I have learned from that experience that God can work in our lives, and even if we get out of hand, we still belong to Him. He

promises to chasten us and bring us back or down, whatever the case may require.

Now when I'm preaching, and it seems that people are listening and I have the audience's attention, I don't worry about getting proud—but I do worry about my pants!

Chapter 20

Dead Sea or Galilee?

“Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

There are two principal bodies of water in Palestine. The same river runs into both—two seas, fed by the same river—but they are vastly different. One, of course, is the Sea of Galilee. The other is the Dead Sea.

The Jordan River runs into the Sea of Galilee from the north and out to the south. It is full of life, even though for thousands of years fishermen have fished those waters. The secret to its constant, prolific life is that it has a constant fresh supply of water running in and back out.

On the other hand, just a few miles to the south is the lowest point on planet Earth. Thirteen hundred feet below sea level, you will find the Dead Sea, a place where once stood the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It's called the Dead Sea because it contains no life. There's not a single fish or tadpole in that entire body of water.

The Jordan River runs into the Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan River runs into the Dead Sea. One is full of life and one is full of death. What makes the difference?

The secret is that the Jordan River also runs out of the Sea of Galilee, but nothing runs out of the Dead Sea. Because it is a warm desert region, the water evaporates faster than it can fill the

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

basin and run out, so it's always taking and never giving. It has become stagnant and dead. It is a sink full of minerals and salts. Nothing can survive in it.

The principle is the same in the Christian life. You cannot survive and thrive as a Christian unless you are sharing what the Lord imparts. This is true in almost every area of life. As we have one hand open before the Lord receiving, we must also have the other hand open to the world in giving.

A Christian cannot stay fresh unless he becomes a channel of blessings to others. If we take the gospel and the plan of salvation and then just sit on them in church and keep them warm in the pew, our experience will dry up and die. I believe this is one of the reasons why such a high percentage of baby Christians expire. They're taught to accept the good news, but nobody involves them in *sharing* it.

A new Christian may say, "I don't know enough to share."

Nobody knows everything. God asks us to share what we *do* know.

Another may say, "I'm not good enough to share."

But part of the Christian's growing process is sharing salvation.

For years I always felt guilty when I found myself sharing Jesus, because I thought I wasn't worthy. There were still too many defects and faults in my character. How could God use me to bring the message of life to someone else when my character was so flawed?

But then I read a passage in the Bible where Jesus turned to Peter one day and said, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31, 32, KJV).

When are you converted? This was about three years into the ministry of Christ. Jesus had sent Peter and the other apostles on preaching missions, and now Jesus says to Peter, "When you are converted."

You mean the Lord can use people who are not thoroughly

converted? Yes, I think the Bible means just that. Part of our conversion process is in working for the Lord, in sharing what we have.

Peter had made a commitment to believe in Jesus and follow Him, but he had not been thoroughly converted. I don't know if there is anyone who is a Christian who would claim to be perfect (though I believe preachers and laymen should practice what they preach), but whenever an opportunity comes to share the gospel, we should take advantage of it, because that is part of our conversion process.

I pick up hitchhikers as a part of my personal witnessing. Over the course of my Christian life, I have picked up hundreds of hitchhikers, and have had a variety of experiences, most of them good. I suppose the reason I do this is that I know how they feel—and I have a captive audience! I find it's very helpful to wait until I'm on an interstate highway going about sixty-five miles per hour before giving my gospel presentation! Then, when I ask the person if he wants to accept Jesus, I speed up. I get a lot more decisions that way. (Just kidding!)

I remember one experience when I was driving the winding Covelo road by myself. I had been having some trials, and I began to feel sorry for myself. I think we all have days when we think we'll never make it as Christians, when we're ready to throw in the towel; we feel discouraged, as though there are too many changes we need to make.

In this state of mind, when I reached the turnoff for Highway 101, I saw a young man sitting on the roadside hitchhiking. With some degree of reluctance, I pulled over and picked him up. I questioned whether I was in any state of mind to help somebody else, but I probably have 50,000 miles on my thumb from hitchhiking, and I know how it feels to sit there hour after hour hoping someone will help and nobody does.

When this young man got into my car, he was very animated and excited and wanted to talk. When he found out that I was a minister, he came up with a whole list of questions. "What exactly is a

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

Christian?" "What do you believe?" "What church do you go to?"

Little by little, as I attempted to answer his questions, I felt myself emerging from my depression. By the time I dropped him off twelve miles down the road, I was praising the Lord for the opportunity to share the good news, even in a small way, with another soul.

Sharing my faith was God's method of reminding me that He's real.

This is one of the main reasons why I am involved in the ministry. Not only do I receive a blessing from seeing other people come to Christ, but I am kept alive by sharing the good news with them.

Someone Needs to Tell Them

A mother in North Africa struggles day by day.
Her children labor in the fields; they seldom laugh,
They seldom play.

Their father's heart is heavy and his hands are sore.
But the burden that he carries is not a lack of bread;
He's wishing for his family something more.

Someone needs to tell them, someone needs to share.
Show them life eternal and Jesus' loving care.
Someone needs to sacrifice and let His children know.
Someone needs to tell them, someone needs to go.

There's a man in Georgia pushing eighty years.
His friends down at the coffee shop don't see his pain
Or lonely tears.

He has some children somewhere, so he lingers by the phone.
He's afraid of dying, but he's more afraid of life.

DEAD SEA OR GALILEE?

Who will tell him he is not alone?
Someone needs to tell them, someone needs to share.
Show them life eternal, and Jesus' loving care.
Someone needs to sacrifice and let His children know.
Someone needs to tell them, someone needs to go.

When Jesus rose victorious, He spoke His battle plan.
Go tell every nation, every woman, every man,
The Great Commission challenge, teach the old and young,
From your friends at hand to a foreign land,
Every race and kindred, every tongue.

Someone needs to tell them, someone needs to share.
Show them life eternal, and Jesus' loving care.
Someone needs to sacrifice and let His children know.
Someone needs to tell them, someone needs to go.

—Doug Batchelor

Chapter 21

From the Fire

“Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

I first met Tommy Brown while I was living in Texas. He and his wife Louise and their children soon became good friends with our family. They expressed an interest in moving to the country, so, since my family and I were always on the road doing seminars, we invited them to come and live in our home in the hills of northern California.

One day when we were back in California, several families gathered for a campout up in the redwoods. That evening, about twenty children were sitting around a large bonfire. In order to have some peaceful moments, the parents stood nearby, talking about things that parents talk about.

You know, of course, that most children can't just sit by a fire and look at it. Our youngsters had gathered sticks and were poking the fire and tossing in twigs and leaves. My oldest child, Rachael, nine years old, was sitting in a lawn chair watching the others play. For some reason she leaned forward to poke the fire, and as she leaned forward, the folding chair collapsed and catapulted her right into the middle of the bonfire.

There I stood, fifty feet away, and I knew instantly that even if I jumped at supersonic speed, Rachael would be badly burned. I saw the entire incident happen as if in slow motion, and it

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

seemed as though my heart froze in my throat.

Tommy Brown had been standing near the children, and in a flash he jumped into the fire, grabbed Rachel by her jacket and pants, and threw her out. Her jacket was melted, her hair was singed, and she had a few minor burns, but aside from that, she did not suffer any serious injury.

Only a parent can understand the gratitude, relief, and joy that comes when your child has had such a close call with disaster. I was so thankful that Tommy was there to pull my little girl out of the fire!

You see, Tommy was a professional firefighter. Not long after this experience, we had several serious forest fires in California. The whole northern half of the state was experiencing a time of drought, and hundreds of thousands of acres were burning. There were entire weeks when we looked out our windows in Covelo, and all we could see was smoke. On some nights we could even see one of the mountaintops around us aglow. Every time a fir tree exploded into flames, it looked like a volcano had erupted.

Well, Tommy was up on those mountains. While fighting the fire one day, he and a crew of four firefighters were trapped in a canyon. The wind changed, and the fire began to chase them up the hill faster than they could run. Fire moving up a hill goes very quickly, especially through brush. They knew that they could not outrun the fire, so they ran into a burned clearing surrounded by brush and struggled to get into their emergency cover as the fire raged around them.

In their tents, the men felt like baked potatoes being cooked in an oven. As they called for help over their emergency radio, Tommy prayed earnestly that God would save their lives. However, when the helicopter came, the blades from the chopper forced air down on the flames, intensifying the heat and making it impossible to land. For the next forty-five minutes the choppers frantically tried to save the men by dumping loads of water directly on the tents. All during this time the pilots could hear through their radio the desperate cries of the men suffering

from intense pain.

Eventually, the fire around them was extinguished, and the men were rescued. One man had died, and Tommy Brown was severely burned. He went through several years of skin grafting, and now travels from time to time, sharing the miracle of God's grace in saving his life.

It grieves me deeply to think that when my little girl needed help, Tommy Brown was there instantly to pull her out of the fire, but when he needed immediate help, no one was able to come to his rescue.

How our heavenly Father must feel when, every day, we are surrounded by His children who are suffering under a burden of guilt and sin and we who are Christians, holding that living water, are oblivious to their cries for help. As Christians we have the serum for the disease from which the world is dying. Daily, thousands of souls are going into eternity unprepared. Living and sharing the Christian life is not only the greatest privilege, but also the greatest *responsibility*.

James 5:20 says, "He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."

Chapter 22

Lost Among the Lights

“Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

One cold December evening in New York City, a family with several children went Christmas shopping. As often happens, the father wanted to buy a present for the mother without her knowing, and the mother wanted to buy a present for the father without his knowing, so they figured they would “divide and conquer.”

The father took a couple of children, and the mother took a couple of children. They parted ways, going different directions up the busy street, with the plan of meeting at an agreed time and place.

What they did not realize was that each one thought the other had taken the youngest child, a little three-year-old girl who was captivated by all of the beautiful Christmas displays in the New York City store windows, unaware that her parents were gone. So as the father went up the street, he felt sure his youngest daughter was with the mother, and the mother felt sure she was with the father.

Meanwhile, the little girl, surrounded by crowds of people, didn't sense that she was abandoned. She was enthralled by the lights and glitter and continued wandering up the street looking at all the animated displays in the store windows.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

A family on their way to a church Christmas program stopped at a light, and the wife remarked to her husband, "Isn't that the Millers' little girl standing there in front of that store window?"

The husband said, "Well, it certainly does look like her."

The wife said, "I wonder where her parents are?"

"Oh, don't worry," the husband assured her. "They wouldn't leave her alone on the street." Being a little late for the church program, they hurried on.

The next morning, that little girl was found frozen to death under the stairs of a brownstone building.

How do you think her parents felt? How hot were their tears when they discovered that their friends had seen their little girl out on the street, cold, alone, and lost, and they drove on to church, never stopping to help?

That's a fitting story to describe the condition of many Christians. We're so busy with church that we forget the purpose of church, which is to share the mercy of God with a lost world.

It's not only the responsibility of a Christian, but it is his privilege and essential for his personal well-being, that he show kindness and mercy to others.

So get involved.

Chapter 23

The Magic of Mercy

“Go, and tell this people . . .” (Isaiah 6:9).

I know the Lord must have a sense of humor! There are some things that He says in His Word that seem to illustrate this. For instance, try to picture a man with a log in his eye pulling a speck out of a friend's eye. Or picture someone trying to lead a camel through the eye of a needle!

I remember one hot day as I was hitchhiking, I prayed earnestly for a ride in a car with air conditioning! Well, I got a ride in the back of a pickup truck, with plenty of air conditioning!

On another occasion, while I was driving alone from Texas to California pulling a trailer, I prayed that the Lord would give me someone to whom I could witness. I have prayed that prayer many times. It is a good way to occupy the hours. Nothing makes time pass more quickly than when you are doing something you enjoy, and I enjoy sharing my faith.

Shortly after I prayed, I saw a young Hispanic gentleman with long black hair standing on the side of the road. He was dressed in what I thought was a peculiar fashion. The weather outside was below freezing, but he was wearing tennis shoes, blue jeans, and a dress shirt.

I pulled over, and he quickly jumped in. He was rubbing his hands together, and I could tell he was very cold. I put the heater

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

in my old 1951 Chevy pickup on high to give him as much heat as possible. It didn't take me long to assess the situation. Evidently he had recently come across the border somewhere near Deming, New Mexico, and was trying to get a ride and find some work in the "Promised Land."

I tried to generate a conversation with him, but discovered that he didn't speak a bit of English. About the only Spanish I knew was "sí, uno, dos, tres . . . tostada, burrito, and enchilada"! I thought to myself, "Lord, thanks a lot! Very funny! I asked for someone to witness to, and he can't even understand me!"

I decided that if ever a person needed the gift of "tongues," I did right then. So I asked the Lord to help me communicate the gospel to this young man during the time we had together.

Through a series of miracles, I was able to understand that he was looking for work, and somehow I managed to get across that I could give him some work, because I was selling firewood at that time. He was so excited! I don't think he had any idea that it would take three days of driving to get to my house.

I had never spoken Spanish before, but by the time we arrived in northern California, I was able to speak enough Spanish to share the gospel with this young man! He came and lived with my family and me for several months and helped me in the firewood business. He attended church and was eventually baptized. Just before his baptism, he stood up in the church and addressed the people. Through the help of a translator, he shared a gripping testimony in which he openly stated that when I picked him up, he had intended to rob and kill me because he could see that I kept a bundle of cash in my jacket pocket. He had been a thief in Chihuahua City, Mexico, and knew what to do.

He went on to explain that everytime we stopped somewhere, I offered to buy him something to eat or something to drink, and when I noticed he needed warmer clothing, I stopped and obtained it for him through a church charity. He summarized his testimony by stating that he really didn't have to kill me because I gave him everything he needed!

THE MAGIC OF MERCY

So kindness not only wins people to Christ, it can even save your life!

When Lot invited the angels into his house, he did it because he was concerned for their safety, never dreaming they were there to save his life (see Genesis 19). When Rebecca watered Abraham's camels, she never dreamed that by this little act of kindness she would be chosen as Isaac's wife (see Genesis 24). When the poor widow offered Elijah her last loaf of bread, she and her son didn't imagine they would be miraculously provided for during the rest of the famine (see 1 Kings 17:11).

The two great commandments are to love God and love your neighbor. The way we show our love for our neighbor is in deeds of mercy and kindness.

Many people never realize the vital role mercy and kindness will play in the judgment. Jesus will separate the saved from the lost based upon how they have loved their neighbors. The Bible says:

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick or in prison, and come to You?"

And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

Friends, did you catch the meaning of these passages? They tell us that the bottom line in the judgment is *how we live our love!* It's one thing to say, "I love the Lord and my neighbor," but it's another thing to demonstrate that love through deeds of kindness.

Jesus spent more time healing and feeding people than preaching to them. Those who experience His works of love are often the most ready to listen to His words of life.

Conclusion

Chapter 24

Pull the Plug

Then I said, "Lord, how long?" (Isaiah 6:11).

When I was about fourteen years old, I lived with my father in Miami Beach, Florida. He had a house right on Biscayne Bay with a yacht, and also a small ski boat. From time to time Dad would trust me enough to let me take the boat out with my friends, but he always warned me not to leave the bay. "Don't take the boat out into the ocean," he would say.

As you have probably gathered, I wasn't always careful in my younger years to follow instructions. On one such occasion, I decided to disregard Dad's warning. I had a couple of buddies with me in the boat, and we headed through the bay, underneath the bridge, and out into the open sea. I wasn't prepared for the height of the waves out there, and as we tried to mount the waves and power our way through the channel and out into the open sea, the boat started nosing into some of the large swells, and soon water was swamping our little sixteen-foot ski boat.

I could see the terror in my friends' faces as I tried to turn the boat around and head it back into the bay. The boat was so full of water that I could barely get the steering to respond. They were grabbing frantically for anything they could use to bail the sea water out of the boat. One of my friends used a diving mask,

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

the other a coffee can, but I knew at that rate it would take forever! It was like trying to drain a bathtub with a teaspoon.

As I tried to navigate back under the bridge into the bay, I called to one of my friends, "Pull the plug!"

All boats this size have a plug at the back that can be pulled to let the water out when the boat is on land.

My friend looked up at me in disbelief and said, "What?"

I yelled again, "Pull the plug! Pull the plug!"

He shouted, "We're already about to sink, and you want me to pull the plug?"

"Trust me!" I said. "Pull the plug!"

It took some doing to push aside the floating gas cans and debris and reach down through the knee-deep water to find the little plug in the back of the boat below the engine. When my friend found it, he looked at me one more time as if to say, "Are you sure this is what you want me to do?" I nodded my head, Yes!

As soon as he had pulled the plug, I pushed the engine throttle all the way forward, and as we began to accelerate, our momentum forced the water out through the hole in the back of the boat. Soon we were screaming along with all the water drained out, at which time my friend replaced the plug.

When water begins to creep into your ship, the answer isn't to spend all your time bailing with a teaspoon. The answer is to pull the plug and give it the gas! If we get involved doing what Jesus has called us to do, our troubles will ~~will~~ "run out" automatically.

As I visit various churches, I am saddened to discover that many are so involved with internal problems, turning molehills into mountains and examining their own bellybuttons, that the pastors are preoccupied with being referees and massaging the saints. Very little is done in these churches by way of outreach.

When I come to a church like that and start an evangelistic meeting, and on opening night the pews are filled with people from the community searching for something better, it's amazing to see the transformation that comes over the members.

Suddenly they begin to value what they have in Christ and Christianity. As they see the people coming night after night, soaking up and appreciating the gospel truths they have taken for granted for so long, it brings a revival into their hearts too.

Jesus tells us that we are supposed to be in the world, but the world is not supposed to be in us. It's kind of like a boat out on the ocean. It's normal for a boat to be in the water. In fact, a boat looks kind of funny on dry land. The problem comes when the water gets in the boat.

I don't think external forces have ever been the greatest threat to the church. It's not the woodpeckers on the outside but the termites on the inside that do the greatest damage. Did you ever notice that a house trailer seldom has termites?

Many years ago when Abraham Lincoln was first campaigning for president, he and a friend were riding through a Southern county, and they came upon a town where some black slaves were being auctioned. In anger Lincoln asked the coachman to stop the buggy, and he watched for a few moments. The hair stood up on the back of his neck as he witnessed the human cargo being bought and sold. He said to his friend, "I can't do anything about this right now, but someday I will, and when I hit it, I'm going to hit it hard."

That's the philosophy we should all have when we accept Christ and become Christians. If you are going to be a Christian, then *be* a Christian. Go for it with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul. The Bible says, "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

You can't treat your Christian experience as if it were some kind of timid experiment—"I wonder whether this works?" "I think I'll try that for a while." You need to go for it with all your heart and soul. When David went out to fight Goliath, he didn't *try* to bring the giant down, he didn't wonder whether he could. The Bible says Goliath *walked* out to meet David, but David *ran* to meet the giant. You must have faith that you can do what God tells you to do, and then go for it with all your heart. Do not put

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

your hand to the plow while looking back, longing for the world (see Luke 9:26).

Jesus tells us that all things are possible to them that believe (see Mark 9:23), and our Christian experience will usually be a reflection of our faith. Our relationship to the Lord will be in proportion to how we believe in Him and how much we trust Him! Now don't misunderstand, in the battle with the enemy, faith is not the only available tool. In addition to faith, I believe God has given every person a free will, and we must not underestimate the power of the will. You've got to *want* to do something. You've got to have a desire.

Sometimes when I work with people to overcome a habit such as drinking or smoking, they say, "I just can't take it anymore. I have to have a cigarette."

So I ask, "How long do you think you could go without a cigarette if someone put a gun to your head and told you he'd pull the trigger if you lighted up?"

They'll ponder the question for a moment and say, "I think I could go quite a while without a smoke!"

What made the difference? Their motivation was radically strengthened when they realized their life depended on their choice.

In our struggle against evil, we must remember these *are* life-and-death issues!

Conclusion

Chapter 25

Learning to Walk

Then I said, "Lord, how long?" (Isaiah 6:11).

Few men have had a greater effect on modern times than Thomas Edison. In one lifetime he left our generation with a heritage of miraculous inventions that changed the world. From the light bulb to the phonograph, his little laboratory continued pumping out one marvel after another till it grew into the massive General Electric Corporation.

Edison was given credit for possessing rare and remarkable genius. In response he would say that most of his inventions were 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration. You see, in his attempt to perfect an invention, he failed many times, but he never gave up. Edison also said, "He that is afraid to fail is afraid to succeed." Whenever we attempt to reach a high goal, we risk a long fall.

In the same way, many people are afraid to take the steps of salvation because they might fail. So they never fulfill the great potential that God has for each one of us. Or they tried and failed once, so they're afraid to try again.

The Bible reminds us that even God's great heroes had their moments of failure and discouragement. But then they reached out and up to God for the resources and strength to pull themselves together and to press on and change the course of history.

SEVEN STEPS TO SALVATION

I remember when my children were babies, I discovered there was a sequence in learning to walk. First they rolled over. Then they advanced to crawling, and for a while they would wobble around on their hands and knees. Eventually they would stand and brace their shaky legs on pieces of furniture. Then they would let go and venture out into the great unknown, and usually they learned some bumpy lessons in the way gravity operates. But that didn't keep them from trying time and again!

When my children were learning to walk, and I saw them stumble and fall, do you suppose I picked them up, gave them a stinging smack, and said, "You clumsy child, you've fallen. Now don't you ever do that again"? Of course not! I was thrilled that they were attempting to walk toward me.

In teaching them to walk I learned a secret. I would hand them a little toy or rattle, and I would hold one end while they held the other. We would then take a few steps together, but without their noticing, I'd let go and move out ahead. Pretty soon they would look at me across the room and then at the rattle swinging in their hand. With a startled expression and a grin, they would continue to stumble forward toward my open arms. Usually, after a couple of days of falling and getting up and trying again, they would take six or seven steps, and I could say they were walking! I would scoop them up in my arms and hug them, and they'd squeal and giggle, and I'd toss them up in the air, and we would rejoice together.

⁴In the same way, friends, your heavenly Father is waiting with outstretched arms. He'll help you take the steps where you tend to fall. He'll help you in your weak points. But don't be discouraged if you fall. Get back up, dust yourself off, and continue walking into the arms of your loving Saviour. As you draw near to God, He will draw near to you (see James 4:8).

Dear friend, while you are reading these words, He is the one who is keeping your lungs breathing and your heart beating in your chest. He loves you so much that He died rather than to see you perish. He offers to take you back to a place where there is no

sin, no sorrow, no suffering, no death or sadness—an everlasting life in bliss with pleasures forevermore! (see Revelation 21:4).

Now if all this is true, nothing is more important than knowing Him and preparing yourself and others for His return! If it isn't true, then nothing really matters.

But I know it's true. Revelation 22:6 says, "These words are faithful and true."

The seven steps in this book outline the science of salvation—a formula for faith. Let's review. First we must see God in the year our King died. After seeing God's goodness, our natural response is to see ourselves and our badness. The goodness of God then leads us to repent and confess our sins. Immediately after that, we must receive the cleansing and power our Lord freely offers. After our new birth we have a desire to hear God, and finally to follow wherever He may lead and go wherever He may send.

These steps are not a process that we just experience one time at the beginning of our Christian walk. We need to see the Lord and examine ourselves on a *daily* basis. We must *daily* feel the need for repentance and confession as the Lord's Prayer indicates. We can *daily* receive His forgiveness, *daily* listen for His voice, and *daily* make ourselves completely available to God by praying that prayer with Jesus, Not my will but thy will be done (see Matthew 26:42).

Friend, don't you want to take these steps now and always? Eternal life and peace are only a prayer away! Why not pray now and receive the new life that Jesus offers? "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7, 8).

"I KNOW CHRIST HAS SAVED ME. SO WHY DO I STILL FEEL LOST?"

Ever feel like this? Do you worry over the "flatness" of your feelings in church, during prayer, or when you read the Bible?

In *Being Saved When You're Feeling Lost*, Dan Day reinforces the facts about our salvation and teaches simple skills in dealing with our often fickle emotions. Day's refreshing book provides a realistic view of feelings in the Christian life. In its pages you'll find real help in achieving a spiritual security you never thought possible.

US\$8.95/Cdn\$10.75. Paper.

Available now at your
local Christian bookstore.

Prices subject to change without notice.

*Being
Saved
When You're
Feeling
Lost*

*A realistic view of emotions
in the Christian life*